

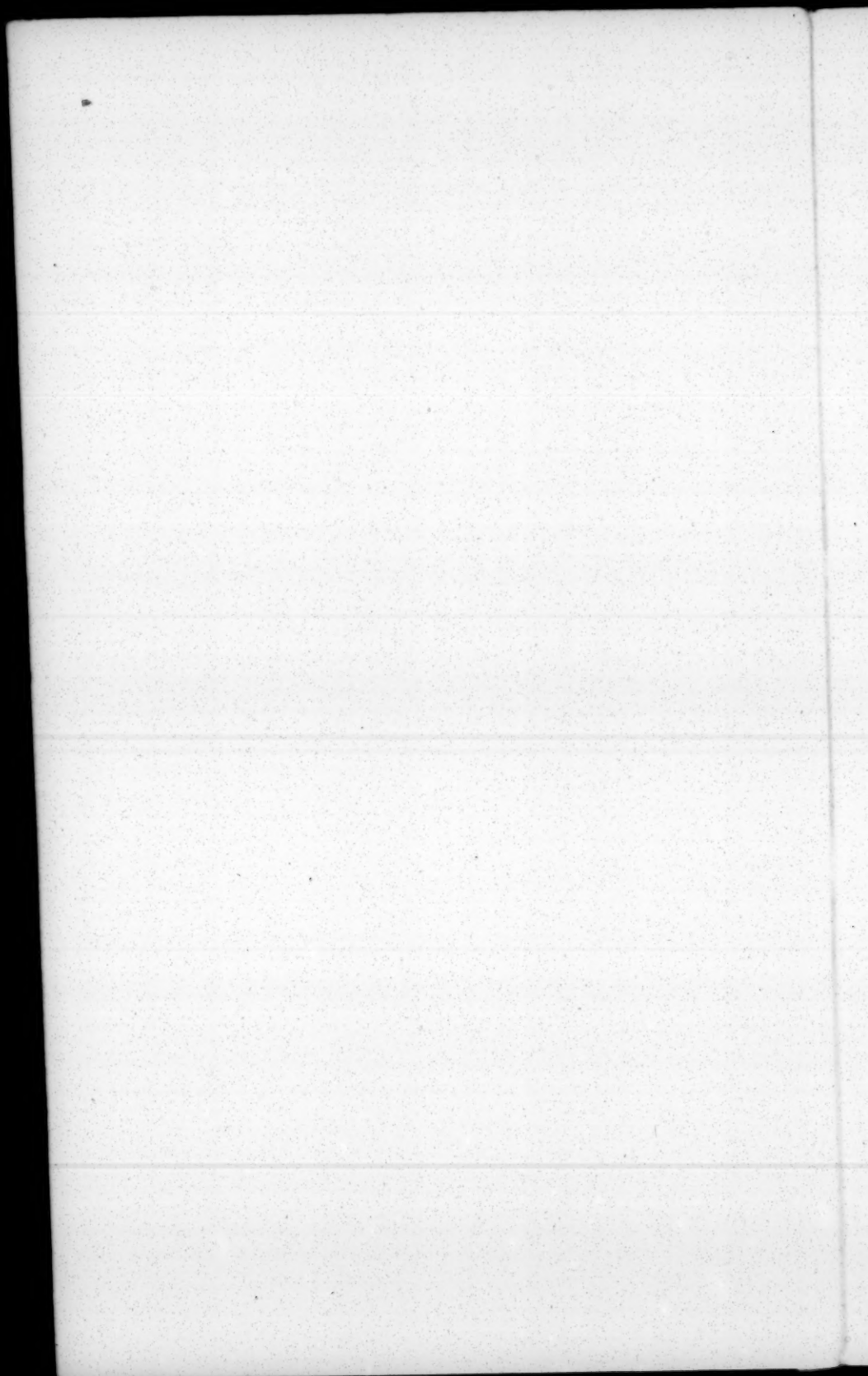
LETTERS

OF AN

ITALIAN NUN

AND AN

ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.



June Perry 1859

3 Northampton Street

LETTERS

OF AN

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AND AN

ENGLISH GENTLEMAN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

J. J. ROUSSEAU.



Il cor gradisce;
E serve a lui chi il suo dover compisce.

FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR H. D. SYMONDS, PATERNOSTER ROW,

By Bye and Law, St. John's Square.

1800.



INTRODUCTION.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO THE EDITOR,

DATED CHAMBERRY, IN SAVOY,

JAN. 7, 1780.

“ ——— THE original manuscript,
an imperfect translation
of which I take the liberty to send you,
is in the possession of a gentleman in
this neighbourhood, to whom I was
presented by our common friend, the
Marquis de Bellegarde.—He was so
obliging as to lend it me for my pe-
rusal, and, on my proposing its pub-
lication,

lication, he informed me that it had been sent to the Editors of the posthumous editions of Rousseau's works, now preparing for the press, who excused themselves from receiving it, because no such work was named among those which he intended should appear after his death. However, I have obtained the liberty to translate and give it to my country.

“ Rousseau passed a considerable time in this gentleman's family, and, during his abode there, was continually amusing himself with his pen, the productions whereof he left behind him, by the desire of his friend, who had so kindly received and cherished him.— They chiefly consist of little tender pieces of poetry, and many of them possess that delicious colouring and affecting

fecting sentiments, which he so well knew how to give to any thing, and to every thing.—Among these were the following Letters, written, to all appearance, without much attention, and, perhaps, as the first sketch of a design, which he intended to have rendered more complete and important. They will, however, be found to contain, though in an inferior degree, the simplicity of story, the delusive improbabilities, the enchanting tenderness, the expressive language, and the romantic virtue, of his other works. That much of their original merit will be evaporated in my Translation, I well know ;—indeed I feel and perceive it. Fidelity is all I can boast.—On that, at least, you may depend ; and, if the sense be preserved, you have my leave and request to make any altera-

tion in the expression, which your ear or your heart may dictate. The title is my own; for the manuscript does not possess a name, but is introduced with the Italian line which preserves its place in the first page.

“ The Marquis de Bellegarde is of opinion that the story has some foundation in truth, and has been turning his thoughts, but in vain, to the recollection of an unpleasant history of this kind, which happened, as he thinks, many years ago, when he was in England. You will perceive that the name of the gentleman who is the supposed writer of a great part of these Letters, is an English one, though disguised by the French manner of spelling, and might lead to a discovery of the event which, as the Marquis

quis imagines, gave Rousseau his subject. It is of that singular nature as to have made some noise at the time it happened, both in England and Italy, and, from its circumstances, not unlikely to have reached the citizen of Geneva during his residence at Venice. It is also that species of story which would come home to such a bosom as his, and might have been intended to form the ground-work for some exertion of his sensibility, which yielded to objects wherein his feelings were more deeply interested, or might be lost in the fancied misery of his future life:—a misery that every humane mind must pity; and, with all its eccentricities, who is there will avow that he does not respect it?

“ In consigning this manuscript to your care, I do it the justice which I think

think it deserves; and, in desiring you to give it to the world, I shall do the world no disservice. In an age like this, when the press teems with works of trifling entertainment, to say no worse, and every provincial town has its circulating library, it is, in some degree, benefiting society to present it with publications, which, while they bear the seducing titles of Romances and Novels, convey a moral, and call forth feelings which that species of composition does not always possess or create. If sensibility is a principle fruitful in virtues; if it promotes the love of our fellow-creatures; if it is the antidote of frivolousness, coquetry and selfishness; why should not its empire be extended? And what sense can there be in opposing a kind of writing, whose tender and affecting melan-

melancholy gives to the pensive mind a source of delicious sympathy? *Malheureux qui raisonne toujours, & ne sent jamais que les defauts !*

“ I have seen indeed some, and not a few of those works which are called sentimental, that, without possessing any thing like nature or moral, have been able to please and affect a certain species of weak, romantic, unreflecting readers. The whole of their merit consists in long-spun apostrophes of love and disappointment, forced descriptions of happiness and misery; while panting hope, trembling fear, frantic despair, and unutterable joy, are sometimes to be found in the same page. This work, I trust, will bear another and a more favourable description.—Rousseau, in the preface to his *Eloisa*,

Eloisa, has declared, that the unmarried woman who reads that work is undone: and, on concluding the perusal of this imperfect but interesting offspring of the same pen, it will be observed, by the reflecting reader, that the young unmarried woman, who suffers herself to commence an epistolary correspondence with a man of her own age, is guilty of a great imprudence; but that, if she writes one letter to him on the subject of Love, she risks her undoing. These are truths of no small importance to female youth, and the guardians of it.

“ That this may be found inferior to the other translated works of its celebrated author, I will readily acknowledge:—but still it was originally written by Rousseau; and I shall not disgrace

grace it by any apology of mine. It is said that the gallypots painted by Raphael are held in high estimation by those who most ardently admire the distinguished productions of that sublime pencil, which has given to its master a name that will never die.”—

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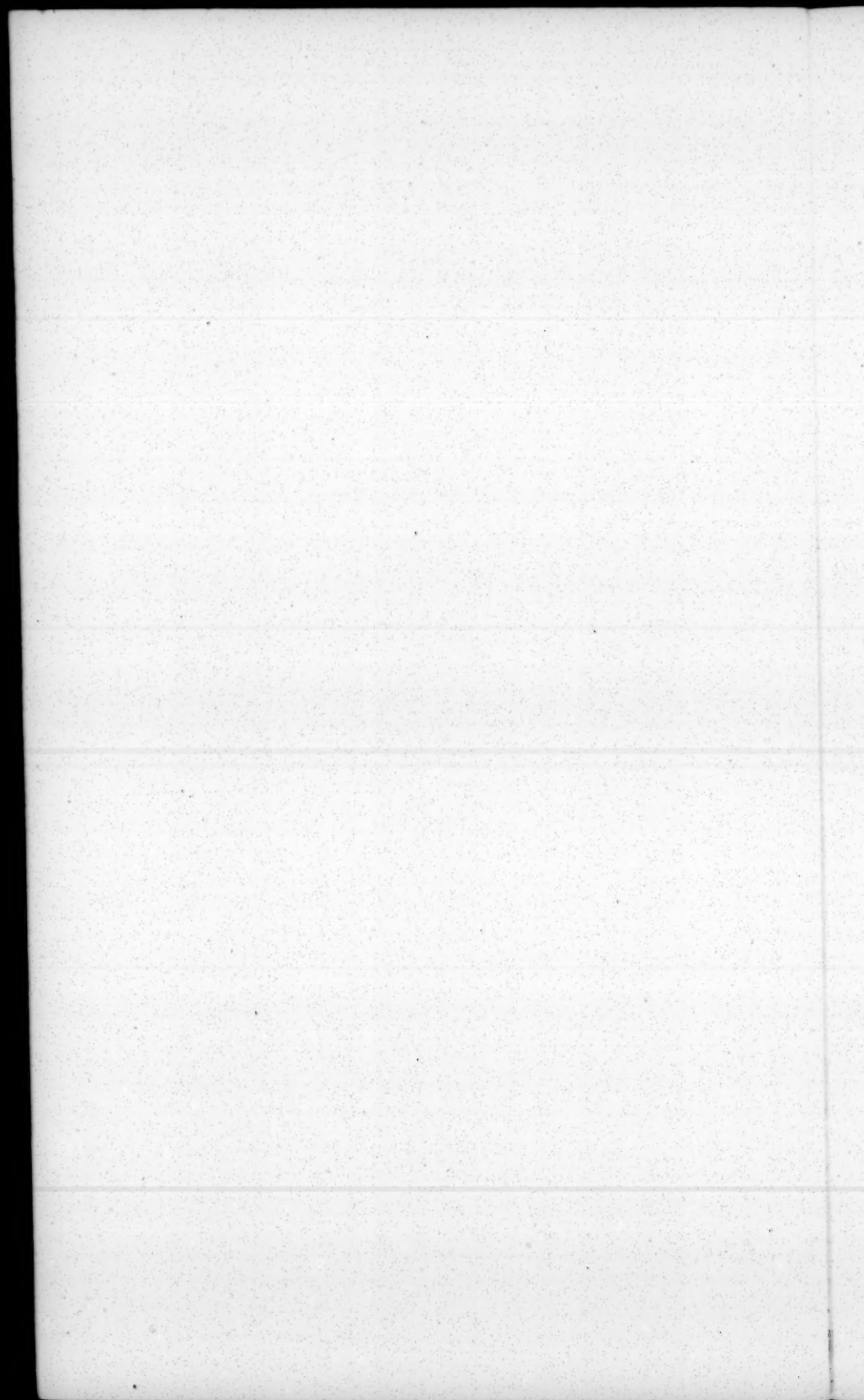
L E T T E R S

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LETTERS
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LETTER I.

TO ISABELLA.

IF I could believe, for a moment, that your eyes had not read the language of mine, or that it were possible for your heart to be a stranger to the tumults of my breast, I should not have had the courage to address you, till hopeless passion had affected my reason, when, perhaps, you would have been alarmed for a moment with the last complaint of my despair.

It is true, lovely Isabella, that my lips never unfolded to you the feelings of my soul; but in the communication of lovers there is a more affecting language than words can form. To a mind of your sensibility, the expressive look, the heaving sigh, the timid silence, will be more intelligible, and sooner felt, than all the protestations which the tongue can utter; and when I have been before your grate, such a language of sincere and respectful passion must have reached you. This letter, therefore, will not surprize you: the instant your eyes have fallen upon the name that is subscribed to it, your heart will announce its contents; you will know the errand of the messenger before it is told; and, if you should feel any tender impulse before the declaration of my distress has awakened your pity, I shall be the happiest and most honoured of men. Ah, Isabella! happiness, reason, every blessing of life, nay, life itself depends upon you; and, surely, you were not formed for destruction.

LETTER II.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE waited an age and you have not answered my letter; perhaps you never mean to answer it. If I have been guilty of presumption, be kind for once and tell me so: do not, I beseech you, conceal from me the judgment you have passed on my crime, that I may haste to breathe my last groan in your sight; and be a melancholy but perfect proof, that, if I was not worthy of your kindness, I did not deserve your cruelty. Mine is not the passion of an hour; I did not yield to it till every trial of reason, absence, and variety, were found to be in vain: I then submitted to a destiny which is irresistible; a destiny which might be happy, and may, perhaps will, be miserable. You, Isabella, are the mistress of it; by your lips it must be pronounced, and I shall bend submissively to their decrees, though I may not long survive them.

I know the difficulties which oppose my passion; I see the natural impossibilities which stand between me and the object of my love, which, in spite of them all, increases every minute;—a sure and certain proof of its growing strength, its powerful impulse, and the vanity of opposition. I have struggled against it as an enemy that would destroy me; I have fled from it as from an enemy I found too strong for me; and, at length, I am forced to yield to it—must I say, as to an enemy who has conquered and bound me in chains from which death alone can deliver me! You, indeed, could change them into silken bands and flowery garlands; but you, all gentle and lovely as you are, may wish to aid the tyrant, and to punish the crime of loving with that silence which will tell me I love in vain. I may find the avenues of your heart more impregnable than the walls of your convent: alas! it may prove a more arduous undertaking to bribe the firm resolutions which guard them, than to melt the stern,

stern, unfeeling portress who locks you from the world.

It is what I owe to my own happiness, to the duties of a life just begun, and the rank I hold in the world, to aim at possessing that object, without which there can be no happiness for me; without which the influence of duty will be weakened, even while the means of performing it may last, and rank will be of no avail; without which my short remaining life will be a scene of clouds and darkness. Hopeless misery is not be borne by human fortitude; and, if you turn from me, there will be but one remedy for my despair.

LETTER III.

TO MR. CROLI.

IT was, I find, a vain hope, that my entrance into this dismal abode was to be the last chastisement of my life; and that, having sacrificed every hope of earthly happiness, I should remain uninterrupted in the painful labour of extracting consolation from the faint and imperfect view of heavenly blessings. Alas! little did I think, and I know not how to credit the declaration, that a face wet with continual tears, and a form shrunk by Sorrow from the little grace it might once possess, could charm your affections, or awaken any other sentiment in your breast than the pity of a moment. Recal your words, I beseech you. It must have been in the delirium of a dream that you have written to me in a language which bears the marks of a troubled reason. Though born to be miserable myself, Heaven, surely, will not augment its cruelty,

cruelty, and make me the instrument of its vengeance, in adding to the misery of others. I implore you, Sir, not to think of continuing a correspondence which must be fruitless; and I beseech you not to write to me again, unless it be to tell me that your reason is returned, and that I shall hear from you no more. *

* Inconsiderate woman! would you preserve your heart from the contagion which approaches you, write no more:—write again, and you are undone.

LETTER IV.

TO ISABELLA.

THE trial has been made, and proved ineffectual. I cannot promise even one poor endeavour to turn my thoughts from you: my eyes have but one direction, and my heart has but one impulse. If my passion for you is a dream, I should wish never to awake; if it should be a reality, it will never be quenched but by the sleep of Death.

Ah, lovely Isabella! has Misery, then, prescribed the vows which you have taken?—Did Sorrow clothe that charming form in the snowy habit which covers it?—Did Despair lead you to the altar, where your happiness has been sacrificed?—Alas!—does your heart fondly regret some darling object, from which you are eternally separated?—It must be so—it cannot be otherwise:—the gloom of your cell is not perpetual; it is sometimes dissipated by the remembrance of him you love, and its
walls

walls are accustomed to the whispers of his name.—If I have divined aright, do not hide the fatal secret from me.—I shall discover it, if my foreboding spirit has not discovered it already.—I see the deep colour of my misfortune.—Your family has stood between you and your affections; they have thrown you into a cloistered prison, where love despairs, and from whence Hymen turns his flight.—Cruel, unnatural, and savage parents! whose last consideration is the happiness of your children, and who, in obedience to the dictates of a false and foolish pride, are content to bury them alive, with all their charms and graces about them, and consign them, without regret, to the living tomb of monastic life.—Alas! alas! Isabella is the child of such parents:—she has felt what I now feel; and the same regret which fills her eyes with tears, urges on my despair. But mine is a generous affection: my love is not founded on the hurry of impetuous passions; it rests on the solid basis of pure and celestial sentiments; and, while I feel that my happiness depends
upon

upon being united to you, I am equally sensible of the necessity that your happiness should depend upon me. My affection asks a return; but if that cannot be given, my hopes are blasted, but my regard will remain unalterable. I shall have every reason to deplore my fate; but I shall find none to complain of you. Nay, so pure is the flame that warms me, which gives life to every thought, and will, at length, consume me, that it turns my mind, for a while, from the sad scene before me, to ask if I can do you good.—If your heart is irrevocably devoted to another—alas! what am I going to write?—yes, too lovely Isabella! if you cannot be mine, I should rejoice to gild the close of my life by bearing you to your wishes.—To see you possessed by another would break my heart; yet, for your sake, I would be the instrument of my own destruction.—My last moments would be brightened by a ray of comfort, on the reflection that you were happy.

LETTER

LETTER V.

THE ANSWER.

IF I consulted the cold, unfeeling oracles of cautious Prudence (and, perhaps, it were better for me if I did consult them) I should not have broke the resolution I had taken of never writing to you again; and, though there is a strange kind of romantic sensibility in your last letter, which should awake suspicion, I cannot but write once more to you, to offer my endeavours to sooth it into reason, and recommend to you that sobriety of reflection which may restore you to yourself, and turn your thoughts to some more substantial hopes of happiness.

Alas! Love never reigned in my breast; that torturing deity did not conduct me to the prison which I now inhabit: other and far different passions led me hither. I sought the gloom of this cell, as an asylum against the horrors of a marriage with the object of my detestation;

detestation; from which I had no means of escaping but by clothing myself in the habit in which you have seen me.

I was formed for the world; I was educated to live in it, and had already been admitted into some small share of its societies; you will, therefore, imagine that the comforts of this solitude find their principal source in the reflection on the evil I have avoided:—if memory glances upon any other circumstance of former pleasure, my heart can scarce sustain the poignant mortification;—my only satisfaction is accompanied with terror, and is like the joy of one, who, having been preserved from imminent danger, finds the consciousness of immediate safety disturbed by the recollection of the perils he has lately escaped. I have only to thank Heaven for having taken me from a situation where I must have been completely miserable, to place me in a state where I cannot be happy.

It is true that I am not formed for a monastic life; its offices are not congenial to my nature; my mind cannot confine itself within
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the walls that surround its mistress ; it is ever on the wing, and the more awful seasons of prayer and devotion cannot restrain it :—nevertheless, I have made a solemn vow, which must not be broken ; it is registered in heaven, whose vengeance would justly pursue me, should I dissolve it. I have possessed, alas ! unfortunately for me, those means of instruction, which, in this country, young persons of my age seldom attain : I have profited of them ; and while they have qualified me to feel, in a greater degree, the misery of my situation, they ought to strengthen the power of resisting any temptations to break a vow which I believe to be of a sacred nature.

Generous stranger ! be content with the grateful esteem which I offer to you. Think no more of me, I beseech you. A gulph, which you can never pass, is placed between us. If it can be any satisfaction to know that I do not love another, it is my wish to impart it to you. But let me, above all things, exhort you to leave this country ; turn from its delusions, and seek your native shores, where,
amid

amid the caresses of your friends, and the duties of your station, you will soon lose the temporary image of beauty, which never had much to boast, and is now no more.

You are not yet arrived to that maturity when impressions take root in the mind, and last through life. The various objects which will excite your esteem, and the important concerns which must awaken your attention, will aid the natural fickleness of your age, to get rid of an idea which you declare to be so tormenting to you. I also am young;—but, having no objects to invite my regard, and bound by one dull, unvarying line of duty, the impressions of my youth, such as they are, promise to be those of my life. My heart has no pleasing expectations of relief; the melancholy which guards every avenue of it from the approach of joy will soon corrode it into insensibility: but till that period arrives, and my wishes are disposed to hasten its approach, the idea of your generous nature will not be forgotten.

LETTER VI.

TO ISABELLA.

You are guilty of a cruel injustice to those charms which would render you the admiration of all mankind, if they were permitted to bless the world:—every feeling, every sentiment of my nature, cries aloud, that the moment I am forgetful of them must be the last of my existence.—Beautiful Isabella! are you then formed for happiness, and must you live in misery?—so young, and without any hopes of relief from sorrow but by chilling Insensibility?—so instructed, and yet doomed to think that those ties are sacred which render life at once miserable and useless?

The greater part of your sex, who bind themselves by monastic vows, are happy in their ignorance, and, being taught to consider the world as full of danger and misery, think themselves blest in the covert to which they have fled for shelter; and find in the duties of religion

religion a calm satisfaction which is not diminished by the remembrance of other pleasure :—but you, who were not intended for monastic life, whose mind was enlightened in order to take a part in the concerns of the world, who were formed by nature for a life of reason, reflection, and society, you must possess far, far different feelings.—Oh, Isabella, when the midnight choir lifts up its voice, where are your thoughts and what are your sorrows ! Amid your broken slumbers, what pleasing object does Fancy sometimes present to you, to add new disappointment to your waking hours ! Can a vow, which binds you to support such a life, be known in heaven ? If so, it must be inscribed in the celestial registry as a crime rather than a virtue ; as a bondage which it would be piety to break, and must be criminal to maintain.

Without entering into any arguments upon a matter which furnishes so many, let me persuade you to consult your own reason, and before that tribunal examine the real force and tenor of that obligation into which you have entered.

entered. Alas ! Reflection must sicken at the rigours of a prison, whose gate freedom is not suffered to approach but to bear you to your grave. Memory, glancing over the scenes of the past, must act a busy and tormenting part ;—Hope, arrayed in all its visionary colours, as it rises to give a fancied glimpse of pleasure, is quenched in a moment.—Oh, Isabella ! when the sighs break forth from your bosom, when the tears wash away the blushes from your cheek, wherefore do you sigh, and why do you weep ?

That I love you, and that the happiness of my life, and life itself, is mingled with my passion, is most true ; nevertheless, it depends upon your answer to this letter, whether the future knowledge of it is to be withheld from you.—If you are contented and at ease, my voice shall never waft a sound to interrupt your repose, nor shall you again see in my changed and distracted form the triumphs of your beauty ;—but if you are wretched, let me offer to you the means of being happy.

LETTER VII.

THE ANSWER.

YOUR questions reach my heart:—I tell you again, as I have already told you, that I am not happy. I will go so far as to assure you, that I never expected happiness in this asylum; and will once more repeat, that I sought it to shelter me from a greater evil. Under the idea of such a privilege, and, at the time, I thought it a great one, I took the vow which has wedded me to this cell for ever, with an unfeigned sincerity. I thanked Heaven with the most perfect gratitude for thus delivering me from the object of my hatred, and I bid adieu to a world which contained him with a most ardent satisfaction. Whatever sentiments, therefore, might succeed, when the sense of immediate danger was passed; and whatever inroads discontent might make upon my mind, when the hurry of deliverance began to subside; I cannot

cannot conceive that the solemnity of my engagements is lessened, or the obligations by which I have bound myself and my life have lost an atom of their force. This is a situation, I must confess, wherein the heart might exert its power of deceiving with great advantage; but I am aware of the danger, and shall, I trust, escape it. I may lament the being driven to such a cruel alternative; but, having once decided, the lot is cast:—the choice was an eternal one for me; and, were the means in my power by which I could be free this moment, I would refuse them.

If I had been the mistress of my fate, and could have ordered the future part of my life to my own pleasure, I should not have chained myself to a cloister; I should not have been so prodigal of happiness as to have remained in a situation wherein my wishes and my duty would have such different objects, whose continual conflict will destroy my repose, and end my being.—But I already see the end of my course, and my wishes are, every hour, shortening the unpleasing path that leads

to it.—In the mean time, sir, I entreat you to remove from me the thought of making you wretched: do not suffer your complaints to reach the ears of one who cannot relieve them, and whose sympathy with yours will not fail to encrease the melancholy cause of her own. Do not combine with my own heart in disturbing the repose of

ISABELLA.

LETTER VIII.

TO ISABELLA.

You suffer yourself, charming Isabella! to be led away by a chimera which will undo you. It is a crime to be miserable when we have it in our power to be happy. The vow which weds you to Sorrow is false in itself, as well as contrary to every law of Nature, to every principle of self-preservation, and the will of Heaven. To fly from misery is more than natural,—it is instinctive; and to avoid
 apparent

apparent evil is a principle which governs every thing that has life and sensation. Perhaps there is not in Nature an event so much to be dreaded by a mind pure and tender as yours, as to be forced into the arms of a man who is the object of your detestation. To turn your back upon such an union, and to fly from such a scene of distress, was the natural result of the first reflection; but your flight has been incomplete, and you are still unhappy. What, Isabella, with your reason and understanding, can you trust yourself to the paw of the Bear, because he has saved you from the jaw of the Lion? Do you call this a deliverance? Can you be resigned to it, and think it a blessing?—Impossible!

If the real happiness or honour of those who were dear to you could be preserved or encreased by the sacrifice of your liberty, you would have some motives to aid your resolution in making you resign: but, superior as you are to the prejudices of your country, you mock at the pretended wisdom of that unsubstantial, irrational, and, I may add, irre-

ligious pride, which, finding it could not govern the affections of your heart to its own purpose, was resolved to disappoint them of any other.

If you can find comfort in the walls which enclose you, I will never suggest a wish to look beyond them.—More, far more than the half of pleasure is to bestow it; the object must participate the joy, or Love is a brutal instinct that should never be named.

You have seen something of the world, and I can perceive from your letters, as I have observed from your conversation and manners, that you were formed to be the honour, the happiness, and the pride of social life. Heaven designed you to be a model of perfection to your sex; and will you oppose the designs of Heaven by shutting it from their sight? Beauty, which expresses itself in the features of an angel,—grace, that enhances the form of Virtue,—smiles, that would charm in heaven,—and words, whose sweetness no music ever equalled, were not given to be hid in the gloom of a Cloister. You were not cast in

so pure a mould, and so highly accomplished with every great and rarest charm to be covered with that impenetrable veil which hides you from the admiration of mankind. Such a flower was not reared in the fair garden of the world to be transplanted into a solitude insensible of its beauty, and where its fragrance is wasted. It is the interest of Heaven to display so fair and bright a part of its creation; and it is promoting the ends of Virtue to pluck it from the mists which becloud it.

That Being, whose aid you invoked when you pronounced the vow that separated you from the world, looks with pity on the weaknesses of his creatures, and will not consider it as an offence against him, that Misery should break its bondage. It would be a virtue, an heroic, a patriot virtue, to force the bolts that confine you. Think, Isabella, that you are answerable for all the good you might do in the world; reflect how little you can perform where you are; and the false Delicacy which now deceives you will fade away before the convictions of Reason. Do

you imagine that the walls of your monastery cannot be scaled?—Oh, lovely Isabella! say that you wish to be free, and I will secure you freedom, or perish in the attempt.

LETTER IX.

THE ANSWER.

You do not deceive me, but you deceive yourself, and feed a flame with hopes that can never be accomplished. Amiable Briton! you seek an object that can never be yours. Though I cannot be happy, Heaven in its mercy, may teach me to be resigned. Could you open the doors of my Cloister, at this moment, I would turn my back upon the offered freedom. What would the world be to me, could I range throughout it? The idea of being a vagabond upon the earth makes me smile for a moment on the narrow limits to which my life is confined. On comparing my situation with that of thousands, who are languishing
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in various shapes of hopeless misery, my heart tells me that I ought to acknowledge the goodness of Providence in having afforded me a shelter from them.

That I might have been happier, is a mere matter of conjecture; that I might have been more wretched, I have already confessed; and who will dare to say that it is not a blessing to be thus equally removed from either situation? Are not the apprehensions of distant evil frequently disappointed by some unexpected alleviation; and are not the hopes of happiness equally liable to be deceived by the distant appearance of their objects? Thus it is that supreme Wisdom appears to preserve a balance in its dispensations to the human race. Alas! if the sum of happiness could be ascertained at the close of life, there would not be that difference between the final accounts of those whom the world determines to be happy and miserable, as that world may imagine. In the present delirium of your passion, you are deceived into a belief that its gratification
would

would not be accompanied with the faintest gleam of infelicity. Alas! that reason, by whose oracles you urge me to be admonished and directed, will tell you far otherwise; Religion is ready to confound such a faith; and human Experience, if I have been rightly informed, would be entirely and universally against you.

I wish you very much to consider, whether, though it may be natural, it is always right, to leave one's wretchedness: there are, surely, situations where to fly from misery would be a mark of cowardice, and be stigmatised with disgrace. What is that principle which men call Honour; which I have heard mentioned as a bond of superior obligation; which will urge your sex to deeds of extreme hardship and equal danger; for which fortune, ease, and even life itself, are often put to the hazard? Reflect a little upon this question, and then consider the vows which a Nun takes, as well as the solemnity which accompanies them, on her assuming a religious life; after this, you will
be

be forced to acknowledge, that it would betray a want of principle, disgraceful in the highest degree, to break such a solemn engagement. The compulsion sometimes used by parents on such occasions may be urged to invalidate its force ; and so it might, if the parent, whose tyranny dragged the victim to the altar, should repent, and had the power of claiming his injured child, and taking her again to his bosom. But this cannot be done : parental authority does not reach this mansion ; and if an inhabitant of it should make her escape, to what is she to trust ? how is she to live ? or where is she to go ? When reduced to despair, the asylum she has quitted may receive her again within its gates, but it must be, at best, to suffer a life of torturing penance ; while her family and relations will execrate her disgrace, and aid her punishment.

Besides, were there no other obstacles to an escape, the lofty walls that enclose us, the massive bars that confine us, and the watchful eyes that guard us, are more than sufficient to damp any spirit of enter-
prise

prise that is not suggested by madness or despair.*

Let me again entreat you to call Reason to your aid: respect my situation, I beseech you, and consider your own. If the few charms which I may possess, and which are every hour fading away, have thus strangely fascinated you, I have another and very unexpected motive to wish that Nature had been a niggard to me: I might then have been unobserved by the monster who drove me hither, and the mortifications of this place would not have been increased by your fruitless sighs and unavailing endeavours.

Again I exhort you to apply your own understanding and reflection to the subject; do not deceive yourself, but open your eyes upon the impossibility of success. If it depended upon me alone, I could not flatter you with a single gleam of hope; but there are a thousand in-

* Alas, Isabella! you are the dupe of your own heart:—it is such an enterterprize that you now meditate.

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surmountable obstacles between your wishes and my consent, even if it were possible to obtain it. Indeed, for my own repose, as well as to turn your thoughts to the recovery of yours, it is my duty to put an end to this correspondence; and, while I entreat you to extinguish a flame which must burn in vain, I ought to give my counsel the energy it deserves by an assurance that this will be the last letter you will ever receive from

ISABELLA.

LETTER

LETTER X.

TO ISABELLA.

IF you wished to banish me for ever from you, in what cruel moment was it that you consented to admit me once again to your presence? Was it your design to complete your triumph, by rendering my love more intolerable, and hastening my despair?

I never saw you in the gay apparel of the world; but, surely, no dress could give a greater force to your charms than that which it is your lot to wear. The habit of parade and fashion may add a more dazzling glare to the beauties of feature and complexion; but where personal charms are heightened by the graces of character, the simple garb in which Religion has clad your heavenly form gives to loveliness its full force, and fixes the attention to its best object. The snowy robe, which hangs in ample folds around you, gives a simple, awful, yet winning dignity, which all
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the luxury of the loom could not afford ; and the black, transparent veil, which, while it hides nothing, sets off every thing, and would make an homely countenance interesting,—alas, what is its office when it floats around your countenance !

Isabella, did you think to cure my passion at once, by calling me again to the contemplation of those charms which inspired it?—and do you think them faded? Beauty, such as thine, does not depend on that bloom which the anger of a moment may encrease or destroy, which the austerities of Religion may dissipate, and Sorrow will eat away. There is a cast of countenance where the majesty of Virtue, and the tenderness of Pity are duly blended ; where the softness of the heart aids the perfect lineaments, and where intellectual Grace preserves one continual struggle with exterior Beauty. This is that loveliness which calls forth the warmest affection, purifies it with every feeling of virtue, and makes it eternal. This is that loveliness which only presents itself to the eye as the avenue by
which

which it may take possession of the soul. Such a loveliness is yours; and that tender melancholy, which you welcome as the foe to your charms, gives them that affecting attraction which completes their power.—I can neither describe nor resist them; and your words have confirmed your written declaration: with a tear on either cheek, and in a tone of voice which almost deprived me of the power of hearing it, you have told me that those charms will never be mine. For what, then, am I to live? With such an assurance, why do I continue a moment on the earth! Is it not the sentence of death that is pronounced against me?—It is,—nor shall it long wait for its accomplishment.—The voice of my complaint shall disturb you no more;—but while I live I will not cease to adore you.

LETTER XI.

TO THE SAME.

IF you could behold, but for a moment, the melancholy silence to which your situation has reduced me, you would accuse your heart for not having dictated some few lines of pity to me. If you are, at length, determined not to enliven me into hope, it cannot, surely, be necessary to your happiness, that your neglect should depress me into despair. Wherefore must I curse the day when I first set my foot on these shores? Why do you force me to execrate the hour that gave me birth, and make it the second wish of my heart, that my eyes had never beheld the sun?—Know, Isabella, and I call every power of Heaven to bear me witness, no consideration in Nature, no human tie, no earthly temptation, shall divorce me from the spot which contains all that is dear to me in the world. I will breathe the same air that you breathe, and enjoy the

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melancholy pleasure of contemplating your prison, till the flame which gives me life shall consume me. My native country shall receive me no more ; the mother that doats on me shall no more embrace her son. The love of you, all cruel as you are, makes me unnatural without remorse, and absorbs every feeling that has hitherto been the claim of Friendship and of Duty.—I have no sensibilities but for you ; my grave will not be far distant from yours ;—yet a little while, and your barbarity shall be glutted with its victim.

Alas !—mine were the fairest hopes ; Fortune smiled lavishly upon me, and a bright scene of prosperity surrounded me ;—but you have conjured up a cloud which obscures the goodliest prospect that ever gave splendor to early life, and have bribed Fate to blast every expectation of happiness.—Cruel Isabella ! the most inexorable Tyrant does not refuse bread and water to the Criminal whom he has consigned to the dungeon !

LETTER XII.

THE ANSWER.

WHAT fatal influence governs me that I should write to you again?—and wherefore do I suffer your reproaches to reach me? Alas! I deserve them not:—my heart laments your anguish; but it does not accuse me of giving one pang to your bosom. When you call me cruel, you are yourself unjust, very unjust indeed, to one who never injured you, who shares your troubles, and would willingly add to the cruelty of her destiny, if that would avail, to calm them for ever.—Ungrateful man! have I used any arts to seduce you?—Have I not, from the first moment you made known your passion, urged every motive that might prevail on you to forget the unattainable object of it? Did I build these walls? Was I the architect of my eternal prison? Did my hands forge the bars beyond which I can-

not pass!—Answer me from your heart, and cease to accuse me.

Hush your passions for a moment, and, in the interval of reason, let me ask you, what would you think of a woman who should break the most solemn vows, risque her honour, and disgrace her sex, (I speak not of life, for that cannot be called a sacrifice,) to throw herself into the arms of a stranger, without any security for her fame or her happiness but the declaration of a passion, which, being kindled in a moment, may, in a moment, be extinguished? You cannot suppose I mean to accuse you of baseness or treachery: this letter proves how free my heart is from such ungenerous suspicions. I doubt not of your present sincerity; but I have a right to consider the fickleness natural to youth. Alas! the many examples of female wretchedness, founded on hasty confidence, which even my small information has unfolded to me, will more than justify me.

Is there a situation so horrible, or can Imagination, in its most gloomy moments,
form

form any lot so worthy of pity, and so totally desperate, as that of a woman in my situation, who, having broken her monastic vows, should be deserted by the man who had seduced her? Banished from her country, not only by a sense of shame, but the dread of punishment,—without the means of support in a distant land, whose language she may not know,—what is left for her but to die in a state of wretchedness which makes me shudder in the reflection, or to gain a precarious subsistence, by a life of abandoned prostitution, which is worse than any wretchedness, and only delays, to encrease, the agonies of despair.

The history of such a dreadful disaster is not the dream of fiction: upon the walls of this Cloister such a story is recorded. I have read, day after day, the horrid tale, and have as often wept the fate of an unhappy sister of this Convent, who was thus seduced, and was thus abandoned; who lived the miserable life, and died the agonizing death, which I have described. Whenever this inscription

meets my eyes, I consider these walls as an asylum, which, though they do not afford me happiness, will, at least, preserve me innocent; and, though this Monastery may not possess an opiate for discontent, it will secure me from despair. With such impressions as these, and under such circumstances as I now profess, the woman who could be won, at such an hazard, to break her solemn engagements, would not deserve to be united to a worthy man, nor be capable of administering to his happiness:—nay, when the ardour of passion began to subside, a worthy man would startle at her imprudence, and find his affection lessen under the natural suspicion of her future infidelities. Such a woman would be unchaste in the contemplation of so bold a design; she would be abandoned before she sought the protection of her seducer. Leave me then, I beseech you;—be grateful to that Providence which smiles upon you, and turn your heart from an unfortunate object who cannot offer the returns it so well deserves. Bestow, if
you

you please, some share of your compassion upon me ; but give your affection to those for whom Heaven designed them.

You tell me, Sir, that you have a Mother who doats upon you: return, then, to comfort the fond parent, who must languish in the absence of such a son as you. Haste, oh haste, to gladden her declining years! Give the smile of joy to those who long for your return, and to your Country that worth which will be an honour to it. The renewal of such glowing affections as you will experience among those to whom Nature has united you, the ardour of those social regards which renewed Friendships will rekindle, and the entrance upon those Duties which your rank must claim, will soon dispel the passion which now torments you, and leave your heart free for the impression of some more worthy object of your own country, of your own religion, and speaking your own language, with whom you will enjoy the fruits of an honest and virtuous passion, unmingled with any remorse, and free from any reproach.—Then,

my generous friend, you will remember these counsels with regard; and, that youthful, ardent passion which now disturbs your peace, being extinct, you will respect the memory of one who made some sacrifices to suppress it, and thank me, at every moment of reflection, that I opposed those desires whose gratification would have caused our mutual undoing.

I have written, in this letter, the language of my heart;—in a dispassionate moment it must be the language of yours. I will consent to receive an answer to this, on the condition that it shall contain a last adieu.—The idea of an eternal farewell from one who has thought so highly of me as you have done, cannot **but** affect me; and if a sensibility I cannot resist forces the waters upon my cheek, be assured that Reason will mingle the tears of satisfaction with them.

LETTER XIII.

TO ISABELLA.

IF a word of reproach stole into any letter which I have addressed to you, I acknowledge its injustice, and must search for an excuse in some moment of distraction, when the weakness of my hopes hurried me into an intemperate arraignment of your heart. It deserves an higher praise than I have the power to bestow, and to gain admittance into it is the object of all my wishes. If I am not found worthy to be received into that temple of all good, let not the Divinity, who possesses it, exclude me from the sad privilege of passing the rest of my devoted life before its gates. When I have expired there, every sorrow will be at an end ; but to turn from it would be a living death of cruel reflection and bitter disappointment. Alas ! I have no right to conceive, much less to write, an accusation
against

against you. If I could dare to accuse Providence, I should say it was unjust in suffering one of its creatures, on whom it had been so lavish, to be hidden from the eye of the world; and that to plant such a flower in a desert, would be to justify the avarice which makes treasure of no use. But the ways of Heaven, however mysterious, should be respected by weak mortals, and the severest storms of life demand submission instead of reproach. Submission is a necessary duty, and reproach is the worst of crimes: hardened Villainy and outrageous Despair are alone capable of committing it.

To be deprived of that which can alone make life valuable, is a circumstance of real misery: to have the only hope blasted on which happiness depends, is the summit of misfortune. Such a situation will be mine, if I do not possess you; but it shall not make me blaspheme against Heaven or you. I cannot command either my feelings or my fate; but I can offer the one as a silent sacrifice to you, and submit with patience,
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a reluctant patience I fear it must be, to the other.

You command me to return to my native country;—yes, Isabella commands, and I cannot obey her. Alas! you must accompany me thither, or I shall never see it more. My mind is so deeply impressed with your image, that it is not susceptible of any other. I am not a slave to the delusions of love, but to love itself; that ennobling and tender sentiment, which gives to the soul a proper sensibility of its own nature, which awakens the finest and most exalted feelings, that raises humanity to something more than human, and is only a better name for the most exalted virtue.

Do not be surprised nor angry when you are informed that I have put an end to a connection which has been nursed with care by those who governed my education; a connection which began with my infancy, and was designed, at a future period, to have been sanctified at the altar. The object is amiable, but she is not Isabella:—I loved her with a
brother's

brother's affection, but not with a lover's rapture; and, if my heart had remained my own, I might have been united to her. I have written to my family on this subject. I have told them, that, in a matter of so much real consequence to myself, I must make my own choice, and be my own master; and that they must not expect the playful fondness of boyish age to rise in mature life to that serious passion which can alone promise a solid happiness to the nuptial union. I have, in short, put an end to their expectations of that nature for ever.—In this business, however, I have not been unfaithful, for I never promised fidelity; I have not been inconstant, for I never vowed constancy. Indeed, I was a total stranger to the passion of Love, till I beheld you; but the moment my eyes met yours, it struck me like the lightning of heaven, and I was blessed or undone for ever. In an instant it seized every part of me, it ran through every vein, and changed me into a new being; my nature was no more the same, my sentiments wore a different colour, and
such

such a strange, unknown, and powerful sensibility possessed me, that I began to think that my features would partake of the transformation.—I now thought no more of my native country; the Mother that bore me was forgotten; and all those ties with which Nature and habit bind the heart seemed at once to be broken.—The world is nothing to me; the spot which contains you seems to be the whole of the universe: in short, my heart is solely and immoveably attached to you.

What are all the beauties of Nature to him who is blind and cannot behold them? The verdant hill, the crystal fountain, the painted meadow, and the towering city, afford no delight to that eye which is beclouded in darkness.—What are the sweetest sounds to that ear whose organs cannot receive them? The most dulcet music, and the persuasion of celestial eloquence, will not affect him who is deaf and cannot hear.—What are the sensibilities to virtue, the power of excellence, the tenderness of pity, and the rapture of doing good, to the heart which is hardened by some
deadly

deadly passion?—Let me add, what are the smiles of Fortune to him who is only anxious for yours : and what attraction can the world have for him but in the spot which you inhabit?—Believe me, charming Isabella ! though the most splendid palace, with all its pleasures, invited me to possess it, I would turn my back upon the offer with disdain, to become the master of a cottage, from whence I could behold the turrets of your prison. It would be no small comfort to say, There she dwells ! and to behold the temple which contains the idol of my heart, though I could not be admitted into it. The pleasure of opening my lattice, to behold the morning sun gild the spires of your convent, would be far greater than the proudest spectacle of the world could afford me ; and, at the evening hour, to breathe my sighs beneath the walls that enclose you, would be a luxury that wealth could not purchase.—It is a melancholy idea, but I should never part with it, that the sun, when it shone upon your grave, might, at the same moment, glimmer upon mine.

you

You tell me to chase away Passion, and you command me to consult Reason.—If by Passion you mean my love of you, there is but one way of doing it, which is to end my being, or, at least, to destroy that sensation which gives to existence its only value. If by Reason you mean any power of reflection abstracted from you, it is impossible; your image is so fastened to my heart, that my very life-strings must break ere it can escape me. You would have me endeavour to convince myself that I ought not to love you; alas! every feeling I possess is so deeply engaged to support an opposing sentiment, that it would be a fruitless, as well as a painful attempt. Reason would turn aside from such an employment, to ask you, whether those engagements which snatch you from the duties of life can be sacred; and if a situation which is contrary to your nature, and must produce repining and discontent, can be approved by Heaven? If your limbs were bound, and the tyrant who caused the cruelty should tell you that they were not made for motion, would
you

you not scoff at the falsehood, and think it a duty to break asunder the cords that confined you? Is not your present imprisonment, which excludes you from the utilities and functions, the pleasures and honours of life; which is the offspring of abominable policy and gloomy superstition; Is not, I say, such an imprisonment equally injurious and detestable, as shameful to support as it would be righteous to escape?

As for your family and friends, you are already estranged from them. They have driven you from their affections and remembrance. You are now as dead to them as if you were in your grave. If I err not, the principle of a conventual state is founded in an entire separation from all earthly connections, and that all the tender realities of life are to be absorbed in the new alliance which is supposed to be made with Heaven. If such an allotment can so fill the mind as to produce contentment, nothing more can be said; exchange is fortunate, and the anticipation of another and better world is a wondrous source of satisfaction

tion on earth. But if you should find, lovely Isabella! that these celestial espousals are but the dreams of Enthusiasm; if your enlightened understanding should pierce the clouds of Superstition, and discover the fallacy of such a notion; if your heart should revolt at the blasphemy of such an idea, what remains for you?—To return to that home which was once your own, would be a perilous and vain attempt; its doors must be shut against you, while its inhabitants, instead of affording you protection, would, in the furious zeal of mistaken piety, seize you as a criminal, and bear you back, laden with disgrace, and trembling with the fears of punishment, to the Cloister which you had deserted. What then remains for you, but to suffer your bondage with patience, and to let your eyes look upon one unvarying, dismal, prospect, through the rest of your days, or turn at once from it to where an honourable marriage, a most ardent affection, a splendid fortune, and all the pleasing, tender relations of life, unfold themselves to you. These objects are not ideal; Fancy has

not made them gay with its delusive colours: the whole exists; and I wait but your permission to conduct you to it. Love will find wings to top your lofty walls; it possesses strength to break your bars in twain, and cunning to lull the sleepless dragon that watches you. Isabella! you are on the confines of another kingdom; in a few hours you would be safe from immediate danger; in a few days you may set all danger at defiance; and in a few weeks, oh happy, blissful thought! you may be secure in a land of freedom, where we may be united for ever.

That I am a stranger to you is most true, and, being so, I cannot wonder at your apprehensions; but this is my only crime: conscious, however, of my integrity, and knowing what I am, your distrust mortifies and distracts me. Do not only turn your eyes, but your thoughts also, from that delusive and alarming tale, which pious Fraud has inscribed upon your walls, to make you contented with your chains, and to consider him as an enemy who would aid you to break them.

them.—Alas! must such arts be practised upon you? And is it thus that Reason is to be quenched? Is it thus that the happiness of rational beings is to be perverted?—Isabella cannot be the dupe of such unworthy deceptions.

I do not wish you to wound, in the smallest degree, the delicacy of your own mind: I can live long upon hope, when supreme happiness is its object. Try my fidelity;—let length of time, if no other means will satisfy you, serve to wear away your apprehensions, and beget your confidence: let your fancy be ingenious to find out new modes of proving me; and I beseech you not to be satisfied while the slightest suspicion of my truth may remain.—There is but one command which will not insure obedience.—Oh, Isabella! if you tell me not to love, I cannot obey you.

LETTER XIV.

TO MR. CROLI.

WITHOUT entering into a particular explanation, which at present is not in my power, I must insist on your immediate departure from this place. Do not stay even to write an adieu, but be gone. It is necessary for us both, that you should not make the least delay; and when you are arrived at some distant destination, let me hear from you. The same faithful messenger will continue to forward our communications. If the sentiments of your last letter are sincere, you will not hesitate a moment to obey me.—Adieu!—Do not think me cruel!—These few lines should be the most flattering you ever received from

ISABELLA.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

TO ISABELLA.

NAPLES, —

I HAVE obeyed your commands, and I trust that you are satisfied. For some days I have been flying from happiness, and am now at a torturing distance from you. As I promised submission, however disappointed in the means which you have taken to prove my sincerity, I cannot complain.—But if you have ordained that I am to see you no more, the measure of my griefs will soon be completed.

I have read again and again the paper which was the unexpected warrant of my exile! a thousand times has my curious attention endeavoured to discover, but in vain, the tenderness which, you tell me, lurks within it. Is it a sign of your favour, Isabella, to banish me from you, and at once to dissipate the few

rays of comfort which are left me ; or, rather, to deprive my fainting spirits of what sustained them in life, if my present existence can deserve that name ? I was near you, and sometimes saw and conversed with you ; this was a privilege, the loss whereof cannot find a possible compensation, at the distance to which your commands have driven me. The roof that covered you was a pleasing object to me : I could see the trees which towered above your garden walls, beneath whose shade you sometimes repose ; and to be awakened from my feverish slumbers by the same bell which summoned you to your early duties, was a consolation which I possess no more. These were circumstances of no small importance to one who loves like me. Happiness does not leave its habitation in the human heart, while it has a single point whereon to rest. Though it enjoys but small repose, though it never knows the uninterrupted interval, still it yields, with reluctance, the little it possesses, and when it is driven from the sanctuary it will cleave to the threshold. It strives to attain the whole ;
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this is its aim and ambition ; and, though all its endeavours may prove unavailing in this world, it cannot be driven, but by the severest stroke of Fate, to quit an habitation which it seems to have been originally designed to occupy.

I have now taken my abode in the most beautiful city of the universe, and I preferred it as the place of my present exile, from the recollection of those pleasures it had already afforded me.—But, alas ! my mind is so changed from what it was when I was here before, that the objects of its former amusement and satisfaction produce nought but weariness and disgust.—I was then—but let that pass and be forgotten—such a description would have the appearance of discontent, and, with all my apprehensions, with all the violent agitations of my spirits, I am not discontented ; for I do most solemnly declare, that, though I am at this time the most wretched of human beings, I would not change my lot with the happiest, if I was to be deprived of loving you.—Every thing that is magnificent

and charming in Art and Nature adorn this lovely spot; I know it, but I do not feel it, and speak only from the faint remembrance of the admiration which it received from me before I had seen you: my eyes seem, at this time, to possess their wondrous faculties but to gaze on you: my tongue falters under any other exertion but to speak your praise; my mind is the slave of your charms; and my heart pants but for you. If my dejected spirits were capable of being deluded from their woe, this place not only possesses but offers every means to aid the friendly deception;—but, amidst them all, I remain the same, and the only object which can engage my attention is the angry Volcano, that is now casting forth its burning entrails, and spreads terror and desolation around it. What, can nothing but sights of horror attract my notice, or is it that I also bear a consuming flame within me, and look towards the labouring mountain as an emblem of myself?

The further I fly from you, the more I seem to love you: and, like the bird that is
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lived, in struggling to be free, I encrease my bondage. If you thought that banishment would change the sentiments of my heart, your doubts have deceived you:—I acknowledge your right to make an experiment, vain in itself, and painful to me, and I have submitted to it.—Alas! does the exile forget his native country? Though it were placed amid frozen seas, or beneath burning suns, he looks towards it with a faithful and longing regard, and would gladly leave the fairest elysiums of the earth to return thither.—If you sent me away to lose my importunities, great and inconsiderate was your cruelty; for you might have saved me the pain of a feverish journey, by commanding me into silence: I would have obeyed you, though I had sealed my obedience with my death.—If you wished, by your last injunction, to try the extent of your authority over me, I have satisfied you, and expect my reward.

Happiness and Misery are only known by comparison. The bitter anxiety I suffered when I lived beside your gates was light as
air,

air, when put in the balance against the weight of my present solicitude, now I am at such a distance from you.—Oh, Isabella ! 'tis a mournful absence, and a cruel separation !—The first moments of my departure were hardly to be borne !—My eyes were continually towards your Convent ; my heart directed its sighs there ; and my soul strove, with all its power, to fly thither.—If I must abandon you, the world will become odious to me : in removing from you, I remove from life ; and, in returning to my country, I hasten to my tomb.

At this moment, I am utterly incapable of expressing the smallest part of those emotions which agitate, which torment me without ceasing, and, as it were, animate my misery.—The loss of my life, or my reason, will, I fear, be alone able to represent to you the mournful disquietude of my mind, and the pitiable state of my heart.—My sorrow weighs me down, diffuses a torpor over my senses, and becomes a kind of partial opiate, which makes me insensible to every thing but itself.—Indeed,

deed, indeed, Isabella, life is a burthen to me;—my heart is oppressed beyond description, and nothing will or can relieve it, but your tender consolations.—If you should now neglect me; if you should have sent me into exile, that I might not die in your presence, your wish shall be accomplished; but I swear, by the fatal passion which possesses me, that I will convey to you the last shriek of my despair.

LETTER XVI.

THE ANSWER.

I HAVE already told you, and I am more than sorry that you oblige me to repeat my complaints, of your injustice. You are studious to torment yourself; and, in the restlessness of your own griefs, you lift up your voice against me. Whatever might be my motives to desire your absence, it becomes you to suppose them just, both towards yourself and me. The time may not be distant when you will be made acquainted with them; but you must wait with patience for a disclosure, which, whenever it happens, will afford you some satisfaction.

Why cannot you write to me as a friend? Wherefore are your letters filled with descriptions of your own misery, with accusations of my cruelty, and the menaces of
your

your own despair? Can you be so mistaken in me, as to suppose that such a method of writing will render them pleasant and acceptable to me! Alas! it will make me wish never to receive them. You have every reason to be satisfied with me: I have already gone very far, perhaps too far, in forming this correspondence with you; and in assuming the power to command you, I have gone still farther.—I ask you, and let the question reach your heart, for what end could I propose a plan for your conduct, if I were not interested in your happiness?—When I reflect on the manner I have acted towards you, the language of your last letter fills me with astonishment: if I know myself, I deserve returns of respect and gratitude, rather than those of menace and reproach.

Let me entreat you to give somewhat of regularity to your sentiments. The sincerity of affection is not proved by wild and incoherent declamation. Pure and solid love is ever accompanied with reason; and, though its language may glow with more than common

mon animation, though, to common observers, it may appear sometimes to stray from its associate, it never quits, in reality, that sober guidance which can alone preserve it from folly and intemperance. If you imagine that the affections of a reasonable woman are to be gained by an unmanly sensibility, you are shamefully mistaken. We may weep over the sorrows of those whom we despise, but something more than extorted compassion is necessary to prepare the heart for the impressions of a tender passion. There are no qualities which women so much admire in the other sex as courage and resolution; even the romantic excesses of them seldom fail to receive their esteem and approbation. The education, the frame, and duties of women, naturally lead them to consider men as their guardians: to them they look for protection; and the manly virtues, which I have already named, qualify them to answer such proper expectations. When, therefore, they are deficient in such an essential and honourable
part

part of their character, the weakness even of women will know how to despise them.

In the language of your last letter, you may reply, that, in all the horrid catalogue of dangers, there is not one which you would not encounter for my sake ; nay, that you would not only risque but sacrifice your life to preserve mine, or make it happy. I am too well disposed to believe you ; but true courage is something more than this. Cowards have been known to fight ; Passion will have its fits of rashness ; the trembling Miser will defend his treasure, as the weakest animal will, in despair, combat with the strongest. But such temporary exertions of Courage do not answer to my ideas of a brave and manly character. He must be disposed, in every act of his life, to manifest a becoming resolution ; and he who passes his days in the peaceful bosom of retirement, may find equal occasion to exert it, with him whose lot is cast in the activity of camps and the turmoil of war. There is a certain dignity of character which the
brave

brave man will never lose, whether he resists the terrors of the tented field, or the temptations of luxurious life ; whether he fights with the armed enemy, or with himself, the most dangerous of all enemies. In vain will the warrior turn the attention of a wise man to the acclamations of his soldiers, if he disgraces his public triumphs by sinking beneath private misfortunes. The bravery of battle is often mechanical; the fear of disgrace, the apprehension of punishment, the spirit of emulation, even the power of sympathy, may make a man brave for the occasion. But the true principle of Courage supports the character whom it inspires, at all times and on all occasions. The mind of that man is above fear, and it is not in the power of human events to make him shrink from his purpose.

Insensibility is a very different quality. The brave man feels, but it is not in a manner unworthy of him. He is capable not only of every great but every tender sentiment. He can love with a real ardour, but which never betrays him into weakness or folly. He calls
forth

forth the admiration of her who inspired his passion, and insures her regard by the dignity of it. When his bosom heaves with the pangs of doubt and suspense, he exhibits an example of that noble suffering which it is the honour and privilege of Beauty to relieve. He does not win his way to the heart by those delusions to which so many weak, unhappy women owe their ruin, but by that affecting demeanour, those kind attentions, generous and manly confidence, which secure the most exalted sentiments of female nature to plead his cause.

This is the character which I would hold up for you to imitation: embrace it, I beseech you, and cease to disgrace yourself by complaint and tears. How often have you threatened to put an end to your life in my presence? In what affecting language do you call my attention to the grave, where your agitated frame is to sleep in peace, and to find a refuge from my cruelties?—Gracious Heaven!—and is it possible you can think me cruel!—

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That such ideas as these do not affect me, I have not declared;—they really go much farther, they terrify and alarm me;—they distract that tenderness you wish to inspire, and disturb that sympathising pity which a sincere passion will not fail, in some degree, to awaken in a feeling bosom. I know, my friend, as well as you, what Despair can meditate; but it is unworthy of you, and hitherto you have no reason to despair.

To excite compassion is considered as a general and easy method to gain the female heart! and it may sometimes effect the purpose in the ordinary and uninterrupted intercourse of life. But it must be something more than pity;—the noblest and most exalted sentiments can alone urge a woman to risque what such a prisoner as I am must hazard to obtain my freedom. Do you think that I should contrive an escape from these walls for no other purpose but to hush a sigh, or wipe away a tear? No, my friend, you must first teach me to esteem, to admire, to worship you; and to form and partake the happiness
of

of the being one adores, would make every hazard contemptible, and justify the utmost effort of human resolution.

Read this letter with attention; yield to its suggestions; rouse yourself from that heaviness of soul which at once distresses and dishonours you. Love, pure, generous, disinterested love, elevates the human character. Convince me that you glow with such a passion by those proofs which may destroy every suspicion. If I did not think you capable of it, this letter would never have been written.— I do not wish to deal in vaunting language; but these sentiments do not disgrace me: and, if you are at all skilled in the human heart, I need not tell you, that she who possesses them will not be checked, by any obstacle on earth, from endeavouring, at least, to become the blessing of superior virtue. Adieu!

LETTER XVII.

TO ISABELLA.

IF I left you in despair, where is the wonder that I should write the language of it? You have now enlivened me with hope, and I am hurried into the extreme of joy. Complaint was become natural to me:—but I am unused to acknowledgement; and if my gratitude has delayed its offerings, be assured, that, in spite of my hourly endeavours, I was not sooner capable of presenting them in that form which might render them acceptable. I felt so much on the celestial goodness of your last letter, and found my expressions so inadequate to my feelings, that I was obliged to let the delirium of my happiness, in some degree, subside, before I could write to you as I ought. Ever lovely Isabella! I will obey your commands without a murmur; I will listen to your instructions; you shall form
me

me to your will ; and if a pilgrimage to Mecca would do you good, I would undertake it with rapture.

I now find my love for you solemnized by an awfulness of character which it did not possess before. I, alas ! had conceived it to be perfect, but I now feel that it wanted its present accompaniments to give it perfection. It cannot be more ardent or sincere, but I am, I know not how, more satisfied with it. You have made your superiority beam forth with an higher lustre, by fortifying my despondent mind with the instructions of Wisdom, and communicating the rays of Hope to dispel the clouds that had surrounded me. I begin to discern a possibility of happiness, which has enlivened me into a capacity for some of the enjoyments of life. My heart does not now sicken at the thoughts of society, and I have ventured upon the serene participation of social satisfaction : nay, I now attend to the thunders of the neighbouring mountain, and behold its flaming eruptions with some degree of apprehension ; but, before I heard from you, I had

formed, again and again, the desperate wish that its burning streams might overtake and consume me. But my hopes now tell me that there is something which may make life desirable.

I only waited to hear from you to make a voyage to some of the islands of the Mediterranean. Such a design, I must own, was formed with the wish that I might never return; and now, without any real cause for apprehension, I tremble at the hazard of it.—What a strange compound is this frail being of ours! the sport of every passion, the slave of every opinion; governed not only by the events of life, but subject to the air we breathe, and the climate beneath which we live: sometimes elevated, as it were, above our nature, and sometimes depressed into an imbecility which is as far beneath it: now inflamed with rage, and now trembling with fear: alternately the object of praise and condemnation, of envy and of pity, of admiration and contempt. In this fever of life, I feel an equal danger from the burning as from the chilling fits; and if
you

you do not apply the effectual balm to my heart, which you alone possess, my frame will, at length, sink beneath the conflict, and you will lose the blessed privilege of making him who loves you happy.

That I may never see you again is a most bitter reflection; and when I turn mine eyes from the paper, and look upon the vessel that waits to bear me still farther from you, I heave a sigh that would burst any bosom but mine.—But since I am banished from your presence, it matters little where I go: your image will accompany me in the blooming vale or in the sandy desert; on the mountain's height, or on the bosom of the wave. It will not leave me for a moment, and I shall, at least, have the consolation that it will attend me till I possess the reality, or till I am no more.—I shall be returned before I can receive an answer from you. The gale is favourable; the canvas is unfurled; and the moment I have written this adieu, we shall set sail and be gone.—Why should the tears start from mine eyes as I approach the last line? Why should my

heart sink and grow cold in my breast with the apprehension that it may be an adieu for ever ?



LETTER XVIII.

TO MR. CROLI.

I MORE than wish that this letter may find you arrived in a state of much impatience, and disposed to reproach me. My heart sympathises with you ; and the groundless but cruel fears which chill your bosom have the same effect upon mine, and will continue to agitate it till you announce your safe return. The sea is a faithless element, and danger never ceases to attend the voyager who trusts it. Every wind that has rattled round our turrets, or whistled through these cloisters, has made me tremble for you. Shut out from almost every

every object of Nature but the sky, I watch the floating clouds, and, when they collect themselves into a tempest, I think of you, and yield to those melancholy forebodings, which, in spite of every effort of my reason, so cruelly torment me. When the day is serene, I feel some pleasure in the hopes that you may partake of its serenity; but when the tempest rages, my hostile imagination supposes it to be hastening to your destruction, or already to have destroyed you. Reason, or, at least, a reason so changed as mine, cannot combat these empty delusions; and, as if there was not enough of reality to make me miserable, these shadowy fancies aid the melancholy force of my distress.

I am now convinced of your fidelity: the truth of your passion is not better known to your own breast than it is to mine; and my heart reproaches me every moment for having put it to those trials which may be fatal to us both. The hopes with which my last letter must have inspired you, should have averted a project so pregnant with uneasiness: you take
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a resolution in despair, and put it in practice at the moment when that despair is banished. If my fancy, busy as it is in torturing me, could have supposed so strange a flight, I should have taken every possible precaution to prevent it. Was not your love of horror sufficiently glutted with the terrors of Vesuvius, that you must pass the sea to visit the ravages of *Ætna*? If you contrived this idle expedition to alarm my growing affections, and encrease their rapidity, why should you fulfil the miserable purpose, when you must perceive that they were hastening, alas! too fast, to meet your wishes? The very apprehensions that troubled you at your departure were warnings that you should not go, and should have been obeyed.

You tell me of your impatience for the period of your return: alas! when once you have consigned yourself to the sea, all power is taken from you. You are the slave of the discordant elements which reign there, and you must yield to their capricious direction. They may turn you from your course, and
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the impatient vessel which contains you will be driven at their pleasure. It may be forced upon some barbarous coast, or thrown upon the shattering rock:—just Heaven, avert my fears!—unable to resist the furious billows, it may be overwhelmed by them, and your last faint appeal to me be opposed by the angry wave.

So impatient am I to hear from you, that I had not thrice read your letter, when I hastened to answer it, at a time also, and with a want of precaution, which might undo me. But I cannot resist the impulse of my heart, which will not cease to suffer a fluctuating misery till your own hand has informed me of your safety.

LETTER XIX.

TO THE SAME.

I HAVE waited several days beyond the time I might have expected to hear from you, with a most cruel impatience; and I trust, that, before this reaches Naples, some tidings of your safe arrival there will put an end to it.

I now accuse myself with all the bitterness of reproach, for having driven you so far away. I feel it as an act of injustice, and vengeance has overtaken me. The pains which you have described with so much energy reign in my breast. Other fears have, of late, alarmed me; but they are passed. A very particular attention of late from the Reverend Mother awakened suspicions that our correspondence was discovered, and that the letter which I have so anxiously expected was fallen into her hands. That trouble,
thank

thank Heaven! is over; a trouble which arose from my own trembling conscience. So far from being the object of any unfavourable conjectures, I am appointed, by her preference, to an office of great confidence in the Convent; which I willingly accepted, for reasons which she does not suspect, and you will approve.—Alas! how are those around me deceived! My conduct is the admiration of the old, and the example of the young; while I pity the ignorance of them all, and inwardly glory in the hypocrisy which deceives them. It is true, I am devout; but the object of my devotion is far, far different from theirs. I am an idolater as well as they; but my heart worships another idol. When their hymns ascend the skies, mine soars not above the earth: their prayers are for an heavenly recompence; mine only aspires to mortal happiness. When it is my office to make the organ aid the vocal choir, unseen I chant a less holy song; and when celestial favour is supposed to give my fingers their cunning, a
being

being of this world is in my heart, and inspires me.

Sometimes I envy my sisterhood their happy ignorance, and wish that my bosom possessed it. The busy world is nothing to them; they know none of its cares and troubles, are not perplexed by its doubts and uncertainties, nor will ever be racked by its disappointments. They have already been forever at rest in its tumultuous bed, gained the harbour of peace, without being buffeted by those billows by which the inhabitants of the world must be tossed before they can attain it. Why was instruction given to enlighten my mind, and open the avenues of sorrow?—While my happy sisters look upon the walls which surround them as barriers placed by the kindness of Heaven against the dangers and delusions of a wicked world; my eyes would pierce them, and my heart execrates every obstacle which bars the sight of you—they would fain throw their anxious glances to the sea whereon late you sailed; where, perhaps,
you

you may, at this time, be guiding your impatient vessel ; where, alas ! you may be stemming the menace of an outrageous tide ; where, oh heavens ! you may be freed from all the troubles of a tumultuous life. Every hour brings these sad presages with it ; haste then to banish them for ever.

LETTER XX.

TO THE SAME.

I WRITE to you again in the deepest affliction ; and if this letter produces no happy assurance of you, I shall conclude the worst, and write no more. My two last being unanswered, convinces me that some terrible misfortune has befallen you. The moment I read of your departure from Naples, my heart foreboded what must have since happened. Twice the time allotted for your cruel voyage is elapsed,

elapsed, and I have no notice of your return. The fears of every day trouble me with the most alarming presages; and the visions of the night continually give you to my fancy, in all the horrors of distress, danger, and death. Fate has been a most cruel foe to my happiness, and seems resolved to rob me of every one I loved. The kindest parents just lived to see me sensible of their tenderness. A brother, who might have supplied their place, was buried in the ocean, where you may lie: my protecting friends sunk rapidly from me into their graves; and, at this moment, you may be no more! After all, and should the worst have happened, there is one comfort left for me,—I shall not long survive you.

LETTER XXI.

TO ISABELLA.

MARSEILLES, —

ISABELLA, I have escaped from slavery still to be a slave! The irons with which my barbarian masters fettered me, are shook off; but I have not found freedom. A bondage more lasting than that from which I have been delivered, still holds me fast; and she alone, who has enslaved my heart, can give me perfect liberty. Perhaps the dangers I have passed, and the misery I have suffered, since she heard of me, will soften her obduracy, and hasten the moment of my happiness.—Alas! what am I writing?—She may have thought me ungrateful, and may think of me no more.

Not many days after we had left Naples, and when we were already in sight of Sicily, a

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Barbary

Barbary corsair pursued our ship, which was, unfortunately for us, a Spaniard,—attacked it, and, after a manly resistance on our part, we were forced to submit; a resistance which cost us dear, as it heightened the cruelty which those monsters, for I shall not call them men, who proved our conquerors, exercised over us. My friends, myself, and all the crew, were loaded with chains, and thrown without distinction into the bottom of the vessel, where we were so closely confined, breathed such putrid air, and were fed with such scanty and miserable provisions, that several of my unhappy fellow-prisoners died, and nothing could have preserved me from the same wretched fate but the remembrance and hopes of you. Love darted its vivifying rays into my dark and dismal abode; your form was never absent from me; and in the temporary deliriums of despair, which sometimes seized me, my rage, as I have since been told, did not hinder me from pronouncing your name with a melting excess of tenderness. On the fourth day,—for we had been frequently becalmed

calmed since our capture,—our stern masters, finding that death made such an havock among their prey, suffered us, from time to time, to breathe the fresh air, and to see the light of the sun. The weather, however, becoming favourable, we soon arrived at Algiers, and were immediately thrown into a dungeon, where Hope entirely forsook me, and I expected, nay wished, every moment to pour forth my last sigh to you. I did not, however, remain long in this miserable situation: by the active zeal of the British Consul, my liberty was soon restored to me, and my despairing bosom yielded to the delicious hopes of seeing you once again. I seized the opportunity of a ship that was setting sail for Marseilles, to quit the barbarous shore: after a short voyage I am safe arrived, but so feeble and emaciated, that your penetrating eye would not be able to distinguish the features you knew so well. It was my determined purpose to return instantly to you; but the weak state in which I found myself, and the remonstrances of my physician, who assured

me I should not survive such a journey, even if I should be able to complete it, has arrested my design. Nothing but the apprehensions of certain death, my Isabella! could have hindered me from hastening to present myself at your grate. I must content myself, therefore, at this moment, with writing to you; and though I already find myself better, it belonged only to such a passion as mine, which gives a temporary strength to nature, and makes it capable of efforts beyond its ordinary powers, to inspire me with force to write this imperfect letter. May I trust that it will meet with a tender reception from you? that you will pity my distresses, and give me the blessed assurance that you will soon relieve them? In vain shall I have escaped the dangers of the sea; in vain shall I have survived the cruelty of barbarians; in vain will favouring Heaven restore me to health and strength, if you do not complete the work, and assure me that you will be mine.

A Neapolitan vessel, which is on the moment of departure from this port, bears my
orders

orders to forward any letters, that may be now expecting me at Naples, to this place. I flatter myself that some of them will give me tidings of you; perhaps some kind assurances that a life almost miraculously preserved, is destined to be happy. If I had no other evil to combat, my impatience would prove a disease till I hear from you. If, however, after all, my sufferings should quicken the progress of that sensibility which your last letter expresses towards me, I shall thank Heaven, every future hour of my life, for having blessed me with them.

LETTER XXII.

THE ANSWER.

MY heart is surprized with Comfort, at the moment when I had taken Misery for its long and last companion. I had lost all expectation of ever hearing from you again:—it was my firm and sad belief that you were gone where I could be remembered no more. Your resurrection—for such I must consider it—has given new life to your Isabella, and she no longer hesitates to tell you, that, if Fortune favours the designs of Love, she will be yours. The letters which you will receive from Naples say much more; and they must plead my excuse for not being able to give any considerable length to this. The duties I have to fulfil, must, at this time, be most rigorously observed, to avert the eye of Suspicion, a demon which continually haunts these walls, from a project

project that I have planned, and of which you will shortly be informed. In the mean time, pay every possible attention to your health, for her sake who is so deeply interested in it;—but write to me no more.—The idea of your sufferings, my dear friend, is painful beyond description.—Unchristian men!——

But let me turn my thoughts from a scene so full of horror, and rather bend my knees in gratitude to Heaven for having preserved you, than be guilty of impious wishes against barbarians, who, as they know no mercy, will find none.—If I do not express myself with the tenderness which you might expect, do not imagine that it has suffered any diminution in my heart;—alas! it encreases there, if it can encrease, every moment.—This is a time to act: affection must now begin to shew itself in something more than fond expressions; and I trust that my next letter will convince you of my perfect reliance on your fidelity and honour. In the mean time, I beseech you to neglect no precautions which may re-establish and secure your health.—You have my

permission to live in the hopes that I shall employ every hour to hasten the period when you will receive the hand of

ISABELLA.

LETTER XXIII.

TO THE SAME.

AT this silent hour, when the inhabitants of these walls are at rest, I enjoy an happiness which they can never know. I gild the midnight gloom in addressing myself to you:—my heart speaks as if you were here to answer it, and offers up its watchful hours to the object of it.—Having yielded to this effusion of tenderness, which I could not resist, it becomes me now to assume another tone. This letter, my friend, demands your most serious attention.

attention. The language of Passion, and expressions of Regard, must submit, at this time, to the sober dictates of calm Reason. The bold and uncommon enterprize I am about to undertake, requires that this sage oracle should be consulted. It is necessary, before I take the measure for which I am preparing, that there should be a clear intelligence between us. It is a duty incumbent on myself, it is a duty I owe to you, to enter into some consideration of our respective situations, as they relate to ourselves and to each other. Do not imagine, however, that, by this serious introduction, I mean to retract my engagement with you ;—do not be alarmed with the apprehensions that I wish to check those desires which I have myself encouraged :—on the contrary, you are about to receive the best proof I can give that they will be gratified. But it is necessary to be explicit in a matter of such importance to us both ; and I beg of you not to be offended by my declaration, that nothing less than a solemn public Marriage will satisfy me.

I know

I know very well how critical my situation will be when I have escaped from this Cloister, and, which must be the immediate consequence, have taken my flight to another country. I am equally sensible how dependent I must be upon your honour and justice, when I have deprived myself of every other protection: but be assured, though you possessed a degree of perfection never yet known to mortals, heightened by all that wealth and power could give you, I would rather pass my days in the darkness and despair of a dungeon, than associate myself with you in any other character than that of your Wife. Do not, therefore, deceive yourself or me. Think not that an intemperate advantage may be taken of an ardent affection, and a friendless state, to force me to wear any other character. The means of life are, some way or other, ever open to youth and industry; and those arts which I have been taught as the accomplishments of my rank and sex, will not fail to give me the bread of Virtue; and, if the lowest servitude were necessary to attain it, I
would

would joyfully embrace the rude employment to be preserved from Infamy.—But from such a necessity Friendship has already secured me.

A woman, however weak she may be by the general rule of Nature, will sometimes rise to strength which manhood cannot equal; and she, who will encounter the danger and fatigue which I have determined to meet for your sake, is equal to the proof of such declarations as I have now offered to you.—But this is not all. The mere forms of marriage will not content me; it must be solemnized, not only in the face of the world, but in the presence of your mother, and all those relations who are interested in your happiness. It is from them, and from them alone, that we must receive each other at the altar. My only hopes of real comfort in this world depend on an union with you; but, as that rests upon my being qualified to compleat yours, I will not, in spite of my affections, yield to it, if it should be menaced with the unpropitious omen of parental disapprobation. Your
reason

reason cannot but approve these sentiments, which are so irrevocable in my breast, that, should you venture to combat them, my resolution is taken to hear from you no more, and to resign myself, without further hopes, to my present allotment. The mere wish to gratify a violent passion is one thing; the desire of solid happiness is another: the former has no consideration but itself; and, for a short-lived pleasure, makes a willing but fatal sacrifice of every real comfort and honour of life: the latter, being created by a passion which partakes of, and is, indeed, governed by sentiments of virtue, must be accompanied with the prospect of durable satisfaction. You are a young man of no common expectations, possessed of great wealth, and the object of a most tender attention, not only from an anxious parent, but from numerous and honourable friends. Their wishes for your prosperity must look to a wise and suitable marriage: this, indeed, from your own account, was the object of their first thoughts; and you were brought up from your infancy with
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the idea of a particular matrimonial connection. On the contrary, I am the native of a country distant from yours, without fortune, without friends, and have bound myself by the most solemn vows to a religious life and eternal celibacy. You must suppose me, also, to have broken those vows, which, as far as they relate to me, must be regarded as sacred engagements, even by those whose mode of faith declares them to be contrary to the principles of reason and justice. In this situation, and under these particular circumstances, whatever pity might accompany the idea of me in benevolent minds, I should be generally considered with little favour: very harsh opinions may be given upon my subject; and it would not, I fear, be an easy matter to reconcile your marriage with me as prudent and honourable on your part. Gracious Heaven! my intentions may be misrepresented, and, perhaps, my very virtue suspected. At all events I shall have much—much disadvantage to encounter; especially as I have been the cause, though the innocent cause, of turning you
from

from that connection which has been the object and wish of your nearest friends and relations. Who will believe the honours of my birth? or, if that circumstance should meet with the credit it deserves, will it not be said that my conduct has degraded me? General prepossessions will be against me: this I must expect, and could be willing for some time to bear, because I know the purity of my heart, and that they might be worn away by an exemplary discharge of domestic duties. The justice of mankind might, in time, be favourable to me; and I do not imagine that cruel suspicion would long continue to harass me in the character of a fond, affectionate, and faithful wife. If I was so happy as to receive the approbation of your family, I should soon, I trust, be favoured with that of the world.

Such are my sentiments and principles;— I repeat again that they are unchangeable, and that I shall be governed by them alone in the important event which is hanging over me. Be assured that I am unshaken; and if you feel any repugnance to them in your own breast,

breast, if you know, or even suspect, any opposition to them from your own circumstances and connections, I rely upon your honour, in which I have the greatest confidence,—I trust to your heart, which, I firmly believe, cannot be led astray from it,—to be explicit with me and to hide nothing from me in a matter of so much importance to us both. In deceiving me, if it were possible, you will sadly deceive yourself; and in completing my dishonour, you will, most assuredly, promote your own. The very idea of separating you from your family terrifies me; nor would I purchase the happiness of being yours at such a price.

I shall now proceed to tell you, that the plan of my escape is so well formed as not to admit of a doubt of its success; but there are conditions to be fulfilled on your part, previous to my putting it in execution. You must depart for England as soon as your health is re-established; from thence you will inform me whether the way is prepared for my honourable reception: when the happy letter arrives

rives, which shall give me such delightful assurances, I will immediately fly from these detestable walls, and, when I have reached a place of assured security from the danger of pursuit, you shall hear farther from me. Write to me no more, till you can finally determine my fate; whether I am to remain in this cloister to the end of my days, or whether, according to my description, I can be yours. I entreat you to have particular attention to your own personal welfare: your happiness is dear to me as my own. The object, the wish, the prayer of my heart, is to make you happy; but, after all, should future events render that impossible, it will be a great consolation to me, during the remainder of my life, that I have not made you miserable—Adieu!



LETTER XXIV.

TO ISABELLA.

LONDON.

CHARMING Isabella! I am arrived in my native country; I have seen my mother and received her blessing; I have embraced my friends and been melted with their kindness; and, though many objections arose on my imparting the design I had formed with respect to yourself, they were soon silenced: the picture I drew of you, and the desire of seeing me happy, won their commands to tell you, and I obey them with rapture, that they will receive the fair stranger I shall present to them with a pleasure equal to my own. You may now, therefore, hasten to put your escape in execution; and I have nothing to wish, but that your success in completing it,

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may

may be equal to the fond affection which is impatient to crown it. During this important interval, I shall be in a state of suspense the most painful that can be conceived, from which I trust and entreat you will not delay a moment to relieve me.

If it were possible for my idolatry of you to admit of an higher enthusiasm, your last letter would have exalted those sentiments with which your charms and excellence had already inspired me; but my heart has long attained its height of love and admiration. I cannot but approve your wisdom, however unnecessary it may be for you to exert it in framing precautions with respect to me. I am, as I ever will remain, faithful to your affections, and the guardian of your honour. I shall add new lustre to the virtues of my family by adding you to it; and, when they shall see and know you, their present prepossessions will grow into the tenderest regard and affection for you.—Wherefore is the hour yet so distant when I shall adorn my country with the fairest, loveliest, and most excellent
object

object it ever beheld? Why have I not received your commands to meet you on your way, to conduct you hither? Oh, Isabella! why is the solid joy you promise me to be so slow in its completion; and the apprehensions of danger and fatigue, which may distress you in your tedious journey, to have such a space for tormenting me? Command me, I beseech you, to where you shall take your first repose from the hazard of your flight. Who can be so qualified to welcome you to liberty as the happy lover, the office of whose life will be to make it a blessing to you? Who can so well sooth your fears, and calm your agitated spirits, as he whose duty, whose honour, whose supreme happiness it will be, to protect you from every evil throughout your days? You will be unjust both to me and to yourself, if you refuse me this ardent request, and prevent the Lover from giving a proof of what he will be, when he is exalted into the happy character of an husband. It is absolutely necessary that you should have some person to protect you during your journey: a

female companion cannot be sufficient ; and if any other should attend you, I shall be jealous of his charge, and think he robs me of what is now my claim, and mine alone. Think on this, I entreat you ; and do not let a false delicacy subject you to inconveniences and dangers, the very thoughts of which make me tremble.

In the interval of hearing again from you, it will be my happy employment to prepare every-comfort and elegance for your reception, in this land of freedom, which love can command and wealth can purchase. Blessed, truly blessed in the possession of so much excellence, and rich beyond expression in the treasure which I shall have brought from a foreign country to adorn my own, I shall see, with pride, the envy that will wait upon your superior charms, and watch, with pleasure, the rapid decay of that malevolent passion before your superior virtues. Oh, Isabella ! is it possible that I should be so happy as to call you mine ? I know not how to think that Heaven will so compleatly bless me :—my
past

past life cannot merit pre-eminent delight; it must therefore be the duty of my future days to deserve the blessing.

I again implore you to let me meet you on your way; and in the hope of your compliance with this entreaty, I shall be continually prepared for an instant departure. A painful impatience will tyrannize over me till I receive that command which will speed my flight to you.—Adieu! May Heaven protect my darling Isabella!—At this moment, surely, I may call her mine.

LETTER XXV.

TO MR. CROLI.

GENEVA.

I BLESS Heaven, my friend, for having favoured my escape, and conducted me to a place of safety. My resolution was unshaken; it served me well in the moment of trial, and the friends in whom I trusted have proved worthy of my confidence—But when I had turned my back upon those detestable walls that confined me, my spirits failed, and it was with difficulty that nature could be sustained into that degree of strength which was necessary for my flight. So long shut out from objects of nature and the world, my alarms were unceasing, and in every being I met, my fears beheld a pursuer. The torrent that roared, and the pine that whispered, as I passed the mountains, filled me with equal terror; and

and I suffered an agony during my rapid journey which will demand some days of repose to overcome. One of the companions of my flight is the female friend who has been so faithful to us both, and to whom I had entrusted the wreck of that fortune which the hand of the stranger and the rapacity of religion had taken from me.—Her fidelity must be rewarded by every exertion of our friendship throughout life. The other was the sexton of the convent, by whose means I obtained an easy and unsuspected passage from it.—It would have been the most horrible ingratitude to have left him behind to all the rage of religious fury, and, amid the cruelties of severe punishment, to fling his curses after me. The remains of his life, already far spent, it is our duty to cherish with every comfort and consolation. I doubt not but your wishes will equal mine,—for they cannot exceed them,—in assuring to these important friends whatever they can require of us to make them happy. They have every claim upon our gratitude: the one has supplied the place of

every friend I have lost ; she has been a sister,—I must give her a more affecting title, she has been a mother to me :—and low as his station in life has been, I must and shall ever consider the other as my father ; and the tender, respectful duty, which such a dear relation would deserve from me, I shall never cease to offer to him, nor will you be unprepared to follow an example which your heart must so well approve.

However ardently I may wish, my dear friend, to satisfy you in every thing, I cannot, consistent with the principles which now direct my conduct, yield a consent to your meeting me on my way. It is the last time, I believe, that you will ever find me hesitate to manifest a most eager obedience to your will and pleasure ; yet a little while, and I shall be most fondly subservient to them. As soon as I find myself, in some degree, recovered, I shall set forward for Rouen, in Normandy ; the carriage, which is to convey us thither, is already hired. I must beg of you, therefore, on the receipt of this letter, to dispatch some confidential,

fidential, trusty person, to meet me there, who speaks our language as well as yours, in order to conduct me to the happy conclusion of my journey: but I forbid, absolutely forbid, you to accompany him; and I positively insist that you will not present yourself to me till I am arrived at my final destination. I am in a situation of the utmost delicacy: great indeed must be my sense of it when it governs my affections so far as to shackle with form and ceremony the approach of that happiness which awaits me. But I feel the absolute necessity of giving every mark of decency and good sense that the nature of my conduct will bear. It is my duty to give something of character to a proceeding which, as the world is obliged to consider things, will even justify suspicion.

I thank you, from my heart, for all the zeal which you express for my happiness, and feel a most flattering satisfaction at the pleasure you manifest in making preparations for my reception; but nothing will afford me so much delight on my arrival in London as to
find

find your mother there to receive me, and hear from her lips the welcome assurance that she will soon be mine. Without this circumstance, the pleasure even of seeing you will have its interruption, and I shall be dissatisfied. Do not be displeased at my recurring so often to this object of my ambition; if you know any thing of the human heart, it will appear to you in its true light, as the most incontestible proof of my perfect attachment to you.—How must that woman love, who, born to a rank which no one can despise, conscious of her innocence, and enamoured of virtue, should submit to a situation which may make the purity of her intentions suspected! You will tell me, my dear friend, that I ought not to suffer the doubt of a moment to overshadow my peace: but such is the trembling state of my mind, that I have scarce a moment's repose. Do not blame me for a solicitude so flattering to you.—Alas! I have no fears but that I should not be thought worthy of you.

LETTER

LETTER XXVI.

TO ISABELLA.

LONDON.

How I envy, my dearest Isabella, the bearer of this paper ! He will see and converse with you long before it will be my happy fortune. I repine at your commands, but I obey them. You are the mistress of my present as well as future fate ; and from you will the rest of my days receive their every shade of happiness, from the gentlest glow of common reciprocation to the highest flight of human bliss.

The gentleman who will have the honour to present this letter to you, is a person in whom you may confide ; he is your countryman, and has long professed, with credit, the business of teaching the modern European languages in this kingdom. He will have the
happiness

happiness to instruct you in that to which you are to be naturalized. If the winds therefore should prove unfavourable, or you should think a few days repose necessary before you pass the sea, you may amuse yourself with beginning your lessons where I trust and hope you now are. I have ordered him, the moment you arrive in England, to send a courier forward to inform me of the happy tidings, that I may be ready to receive and welcome you to freedom, to love, and to me. This event is the subject of all my thoughts; it accompanies me through the day, and I only sleep to dream of it.

I have never seen you but in the uncomely dress of your religious state; how then will my heart be enraptured when I see my pensive nun transformed into a woman of the world, and possessing every power of displaying those graces to the utmost advantage, which were divine under every disadvantage of dress, and when seen through a grated window. I know not how I shall bear the sight; the very idea throws a thrilling pleasure

sure through my heart that is almost insupportable. Yet a little while, and this dream shall be realized, and I shall be most blessed. Speed on, ye sluggish hours ! and bring the golden moment with you. Blow, ye favourable gales ! and waft her smoothly o'er the main. May no danger overtake or trouble her with the least alarm ! and may she arrive soon and safe on that happy shore where Love waits to receive her, and make her happy with all it can bestow.

The friends you bring with you shall be mine ; they will have no reason to complain of my ingratitude. I owe them every thing, for they will give me every thing my heart desires ; they will give me you. They shall share my regard and my fortune ; and I trust there will not be a moment of their future lives when repentance will accompany a thought of their friendship to us. When you shall repeat to them the assurances of your grateful kindness, let mine attend and confirm them.

Let

Let your mind be at rest, I beseech you. How is it possible for us to doubt of our mutual love! We are in this world for no other purpose but to enjoy it. Delicious source of my existence! I should not have possessed the heart I have, but to be full of your idea; nor would you have possessed such a soul, if it was not to love me: and it is only to love you as long as you are lovely, and to receive the return of my passion as long as you are beloved, that Heaven has made us so capable of loving each other.

This letter will be, perhaps, the last I shall ever write to you, as I hope never to sustain so long an absence from you as to make such a messenger of my heart necessary; nevertheless, I cannot lengthen it, as I am jealous of every moment that separates me from you, and the bearer of it waits but for my conclusion to speed it towards you. Adieu, my dearest Isabella!—but it shall be the last time I will ever offer such a farewell to you, till Fate commands, and I must say adieu for ever!

LETTER

LETTER XXVII.

TO MR. CROLI.

LONDON.

I RISE from my pillow, which you have covered with the sharpest thorns, to write this letter: and, if it should arrive before you have quitted yours, you may begin to find it uneasy to you. It is time, that I should have some decisive proof of your honourable intentions towards me. My mind has of late found great reason to be alarmed concerning my situation. I have been in this city several weeks, and have never seen or heard from your mother or any of your relations. Your early excuses were received by me without suspicion: the tenderness of my regard was willing to believe them, and the novelty, as well as variety of gay and magnificent scenes

to which I have been so carefully conducted, served to dissipate my attention ; but I am at length awakened from the delirium in which a strange infatuation had so long kept me.— To my infinite agony and astonishment, I have been informed by indubitable circumstances, that, in the world, I bear the title of your mistress. I sent immediately to you, to obtain some serious conversation with you on a matter of such importance to me, but you were not to be found. Unable to sleep, though blessed with a composure of spirits that astonishes me, I shall pass the remainder of the night in calling to your recollection the vows that you made, and the situation into which a confidence in their truth has led me. My eyes are now opened to a variety of circumstances which I had not before observed : alas ! they all confirm my fears, and give a clear but sad prospect of my deplorable situation.

In all my conversations with you, since my arrival in England, you seemed to possess a diffidence, which, at the time, I approved, as
 appearing

appearing to proceed from respectful affection, and that delicacy which might be expected from such a mind as I have hitherto conceived yours to be ; but I now suspect it to have been no more than the endeavour to conceal a distress, arising from some secret wish, or some hidden design, that you have not dared to avow. These apprehensions are confirmed by the conduct of that person, who, on your particular recommendation, has been so continually with me. His assiduous attentions, obliging manners, apparent attachment to you ; your declaration of his integrity, and my passing the greatest part of every day with him, from an eager desire to be instructed in your language ; made me respect him so far as to repose no small degree of confidence in him,—a confidence, of which I now perceive he has availed himself, to offer to me, from time to time, a loose system of morality, which I did not rightly understand, and of which I did not at once see or suspect the object. For some days past he has grown more bold in his opinions : and the discovery I have

made has opened my eyes also to his conduct, which I now consider as a preface to some dishonourable proposal from you, of which he was to be the messenger. He will be admitted to me no more; and I desire to see you without delay, that my fears may be entirely removed, or fully confirmed.

If your mother is in that infirm state of health which you have represented as an excuse for her delaying to come to me, there has been no reason assigned why I should not pay my visit of respect to her. I am in health, and would travel barefooted to her, with pleasure, wherever she may be: a pilgrimage to her bedside would be delightful to me, as I might then, by every act of kind attention, anticipate the duties of a daughter. But, alas! the history of her illness is a mere invention to deceive me;—and is it possible that you can have planned that and many other deceptions which have been contrived to undo me!

I am disposed to believe that you have loved me; at least, it is at present my interest to encourage such a belief:—perhaps you may
love

love me still ; but, I fear, your affection for me does not reign, as it ought, the sole mistress of your heart ; some predominant interest, some secret views, rise superior to it, and am I destined to be the victim !—That can never be ; I am not destitute, and a resolution awakened by wounded honour, as well as injured love, will find resources that cannot enter into your comprehension. Revenge does not belong to my nature, and I have loved you with that noble, disinterested passion, which forbids me to wish that any ill may befall you : but I shall support the dignity of my character to the last ; and, though the world may look cool upon me, I possess the means of preserving myself from my own reproach. A conscious innocence could alone sustain me beneath the severity of those calumnies which have been so falsely, and, I fear, so generally uttered against me : if you do not immediately and publicly prove their falsehood, I am resolved to take the unwelcome task upon myself, and will prosecute my painful but necessary purpose without delay.

There is a dignity in the distress of virtue which elevates the heart against all its oppressions ; that dignity is mine, and dictates a language which I little thought it would be my lot to address to you. I command your immediate declaration of your future intentions concerning me. In telling you of my fears and suspicions I do not accuse you ; and by removing them for ever you may assert your innocence ; but, in my present situation, patience will have but a short existence ; a single evasion, or a proposition of delay, on your part, will at once confirm my fears and determine my conduct. My tongue has not been accustomed to reproach, and my soul soars above the malice of revenge. If you can shield yourself from the accusations of your own heart, it will be well for you ; for you have nothing to fear from mine. If the sight of one whose wrongs cry aloud against you, would awaken your fears and trouble your spirit, be at rest,—you shall see her no more !

LETTER XXVIII.

TO ISABELLA.

I AM in a state of agonizing confusion which is not to be expressed.—Believe me, Isabella! my love for you is of the tenderest nature, and I would sacrifice every thing to make you happy. But, alas! I cannot sanctify our union with that consent which you unfortunately consider as essential to it. My heart is and ever will be yours; my fortune is at your command; but I cannot soften the flinty obstinacy of their breasts, who remain inflexible to my wishes.—I have deceived you—and acknowledge it in the bitterness of sorrow and remorse; but I thought the deception innocent, and that your resolution might be softened to receive the eternal constancy of him you loved, without shackling it

with parental or any other restraint.—You have a better security for it in the power of your charms, and the commanding superiority of your character, than in any ceremony which man may have invented from motives of interest instead of love. My fortune can surround you with a splendor which will attract the envy and admiration of the first people in this kingdom; and, if you will accept it, you may leave them as far behind in figure and enjoyment, as you do in beauty and understanding. Nor can I make so happy an use of the wealth which Heaven has so profusely scattered around me, as to purchase every gratification you can desire: nay, I will put it out of my power to revoke such a completion of my wishes, by making a legal settlement upon you, which shall afford you a noble provision, and certain independence of myself and every one. Perish the thought of binding you by any ties but the silken ones of tender passion!—Such, I trust, will yet unite us to each other; and that those ill-founded scruples which proceed from the infectious

fectious walls where you were inclosed will soon be removed by the purifying air of the world.—I most inviolably promise to be faithful to you; that no other object shall have the least share in my affections; and that, as you are the sovereign mistress of them at this moment, you shall continue to command them to the last hour of my existence.—Do not shudder, my Isabella! at the life of love which awaits you: hasten to enjoy it; and make him, whom you have supremely honoured with your affections, the happiest and most blessed of human beings.—The virtue of love is fidelity; and may every anguish that can torture human nature overtake me when I prove unfaithful to you!

Some affairs of very great importance call me immediately into the country. I go, indeed, with a mind ill-calculated for the arrangements which are foreign to those of the heart: but I live in hopes, that, ere my return, the amiable but romantic enthusiasm, which now possesses you, will have yielded to the resolution of being as happy as wealth and love

can make you.—Be not, Isabella! an enemy to your happiness;—and do not blot the tender expectations of your most fond and ever-affectionate

C—.

LETTER XXIX.

TO MRS. CROLI.

THIS letter, Madam, which is written by one who is a stranger to you, may occasion your surprize, as I believe it will awaken your sensibility. There was a time, indeed, when I flattered, vainly flattered myself, that I should have addressed you in another character, and that, in your face, I should have seen the lineaments of a mother. But this, with many other pleasing expectations, is vanished for ever; and a life, which once promised a splendid happiness, must be passed in the gloom of discontent and sorrow.

Born

Born of one of the first families in Tuscany, I had the misfortune to lose my parents at a time when the ardent wishes of their hearts began to be answered in me, and the labour of assiduous education was not without promise of reward. A brother, who would in some degree have supplied their place, soon followed them to the tomb; and I was left to the sole care of an aged relation, who loved me with real tenderness, and pursued the plan of instruction which my father had begun. At the end of three years, she was also snatched suddenly from me, when, to avoid the horrors of an odious marriage, and to gain an asylum from the threats of a rapacious but powerful kindred, who claimed my inheritance, I entered into a convent, and, in the due course of time, took those vows which were to separate me for ever from the world.— There I remained struggling with discontent, and endeavouring to find a cure for my sorrows in the offices of religious duty. My rank, however, was respected; I received every indulgence that the state I had embraced would

would allow me; my conduct won me the affectionate regards of the sisterhood: and I was verging towards some degree of contentment, when, at a public ceremony of admitting a lady into her noviciate with us, I first beheld your son. It was impossible for me to avoid observing his particular attentions; his eyes were riveted to me, and seemed to pierce my very heart. Though I felt a rising vanity at this event, it would soon have passed away, had I not received, in a very few days, a written declaration of his passion. That declaration, and every letter which has passed between us, you will receive with this: they will tell you, Madam, in language which I must strive to remember no more, the progress of our loves, the consequence of them, and the final cause of this address to you.

I shall not trouble you with a detail of that affection which will be the misfortune and scourge of my future days:—the papers which accompany this letter, if you should deign to read them, will communicate the ardor of my passion, and the right I had to expect the most
generous

generous returns from that of your son. Permit me, however, to mention, that a solemn public marriage, sanctified by your approbation, was the condition upon which I undertook the hazardous enterprize of flying from the convent, and hastening to this kingdom. On my arrival here, Mr. Croli treated me with a most flattering and respectful attention, and offered those excuses for your delay in visiting me, which my credulous affection made me willing to believe.—At length, however, my eyes were opened; and I awoke to all the horrors of my deplorable situation—I discovered that my virtue was not merely suspected, but absolutely lost in the public opinion; and that I was intended to be the dupe of Mr. Croli's future artifice, in order to become the very abominable character with which common fame had already disgraced me.—It was now time to enter upon a positive explanation: I wrote, therefore, to your son on the subject, in terms of the deepest affliction; and he returned the answer which you will read, wherein he throws off the mask at once,

once, and makes an open and most daring proposal to me to become his mistress.—It really astonishes me that the moment of reading the paper, whereon the infamous proposition was written, did not prove my last!—Alas! such an event would have been merciful to me.—But Heaven inspires me with strength to bear my present griefs, that it may inflict upon me its future punishment.—In this state, Madam, with all the tortures of disappointed affection, with all the pangs of wounded honour, and the angry smart of insulted love, I had to expect the bitter reproaches of those who accompanied my flight: but my despair was not yet to be accomplished; and their tender consolations sustained me into existence. They were the means of my escape, have been the companions of my danger, and were to have been rewarded by a share in my happiness; but disappointment, instead of allaying, gave new force to their friendship, and they have given me, in my adverse state, those proofs of affection which is not in the honours

honours and prosperity of this world to reward.

There was, fortunately for me, in this alarming exigence, one person of whom I could ask advice and assistance, and he has proved himself a friend indeed. This gentleman is a Mr. L——, an Italian merchant of eminence and respect, whom I had occasion to see on my first arrival in this kingdom. To the female friend who accompanied me hither, I had long ago entrusted the little treasure which was saved from the injustice of relations and the rapacity of the convent; of this she was a faithful steward. Previous to our quitting Italy, she joined her little fortune to it, and procured letters of credit to Mr. L——, to whose care the whole of it was consigned on our arrival in England. As I was determined never to receive any thing from your son till he had given me a nuptial interest in his possessions, it became a matter of necessity to pay occasional visits to this gentleman:—he appeared to be a man of amiable dispositions; and I trusted to that appearance in
desiring

desiring to see him as my only resource in the unexpected and sad dilemma wherein I found myself. He kindly hastened to grant my request, and without any hesitation or reserve on my part, I told him the all of my sad history, declared to him my resolution of returning to the walls that I had abandoned, and braving the rigours that would meet me there;—and entreated his assistance to point out to me the most ready means of completing my purpose.—My story melted him into tears: and, after much kind endeavour, on his part, to turn me from my design, as well as a thousand friendly offers of service, finding that I was irrevocably determined, at all events, to bid an immediate farewell to this country, he persuaded me not to throw myself into the angry power of my former sisterhood, nor add to the miseries of my life by tempting the pious fury of their punishment.—I listened to his humane counsels, and, before this letter reaches you, shall be proceeding on my way to a retirement which he will not discover, and where I may reflect, without interruption,

terruption, on the future disposition of my days.—This, Madam, is a short history of myself to the moment when I have the honour of addressing myself to you; I intend it only as a kind of outline which the correspondence between your son and myself will fill up, and as an introduction to a few short observations, and one poor request, which will conclude it.

I am worthy of the honour, Madam, to which I aspired, of being your daughter. Permit me to say that my affection for Mr. C—— was of that nature as to have most deeply interested me in every relation and concern of his. His friend would have been my friend:—his mother would have been my mother; and I should have considered it as the pride of my life to have administered, by every affectionate duty, by every kind attention, to the comfort of yours.—His wealth had no influence upon my heart: what I thought a rare superiority of character won me to him; and, if foul fortune had made him poor, my fidelity would never have shrunk,
but

but most willingly shared his poverty with him. This I may now assert without vanity, or without being accused of views from whose gratification I am already removed.—What I have asserted is the truth;—your son knows it to be so, and will hereafter acknowledge it.

I can have no motives to make these declarations, but such as my heart tells me are just;—for, if your son were, at this moment, to offer on his knees, and with that affecting language which won my love, to fulfil his former vows; though you, his venerable parent, were to enforce his entreaties with your own, I call a just God to witness that I would refuse it all!—The insult he has offered to me has rendered him unworthy of me; and there is no misery I would not suffer with pleasure, rather than be united to the man who has harboured the intentions to injure my honour, and to hold me forth to the world as an unchaste name.—If this is the language of Pride,—it is that Pride which is the best protector of Virtue.

I do

I do not, indeed I do not, quit all my fond hopes of happiness without a regret that I cannot describe, and which, I still love the author of my misery so well, as to wish that he may never feel. I suffer for my credulity, the offspring of a blind and fatal passion; and the pangs it has riveted in my heart, will, I fear, remain there, till I am no more. My honour is still my own; I possess the purity of a fair fame, though calumny has endeavoured to rob me of it; and I entreat you, Madam, whenever it may be in your power, to do me justice.—Alas! I little thought that the only letter I should ever address to you would be of this melancholy nature:—I little thought that a necessary act of self-justification from me would ever be hostile to your repose, and wound your parental affections. I had hoped to be the comfort of your declining years, and I am forced by a sad necessity to give them a subject for lamentation. Why did I live to this hour! and wherefore have I strength to survive it!—Must my first address to you be the last! and at the moment I approach

proach you, as it were, for the first time, must I say, Adieu for ever!—But such is the will of inexorable Fate!—Cherish the idea of me, I beseech you, with kindness, for I deserve it; and reflect with pity on the unfortunate

ISABELLA.

LETTER XXX.

TO MR. CROLI.

IF your own conscience does not make you tremble at the sight of this letter, you may peruse its contents without apprehension; it will contain neither accusation nor reproach, and is the last you will ever receive from me. Indeed, I should not have troubled you with an adieu, but to inform you that I shall be far away before it will reach you; and that, if by chance you should be disposed to discover the
path

path I have taken, and to pursue me, your labour will be in vain. I have already given you sufficient proofs of a resolution which is capable of maintaining its purpose in spite of any fatigue or danger; and I think it my duty to assure you, that neither the powers nor temptations of this world will be able to shake it for a moment. I call Heaven to witness, whom I have offended, and whose future wrath I shall endeavour to deprecate by immediate atonement, that I never will, if I can prevent it, see or hear from you again:—but, if a too curious imprudence should obtrude you upon me in the retreat whither I am hastening, know, Sir, that you will hear nothing there but the reproach of insulted virtue; you will find nothing there but a determined purpose to turn my back for ever on the man who has so basely injured me: and though he were to renew every former declaration; though he were ready to sanctify, in the most sacred manner, his former engagements; he would find a steady and inflexible denial, which nothing can overcome. I desire you,

therefore, to spare me, as well as yourself, the pain and mortification of such an interview. There can be no occasion for your adding another pang to the heart which has already suffered more than I thought it would be ever able to sustain. You may as well attempt to command the winds; the ocean's raging tide would be as obedient to your will as my purpose; and may the protection of Heaven eternally forsake me whenever I shall change it!—I trust you know me too well to entertain the faintest hope of such an event.

What have I not done for your sake! I exposed myself to the resentment of my country, and to the severity of its laws against persons of my habit. I put my life to the hazard, and sought a distant nation to which I was a stranger, to make you happy; and what has been my reward?—A wounded reputation and your ingratitude.—Heavens! that you, who knew so well the bottom of my heart, should treat me in this manner!—Have you never reflected on your conduct towards me? Have
you

you forgot all sense of obligation to me?—
 Alas ! your proceedings have not been those
 of a generous mind, or of an honest man.—
 I do not wish to know the success of this letter : if it depends upon me, I shall never know it ; nor will you, I hope, possess the power to trouble the condition which I prepare for myself.

I have already written to your mother a general account of the beginning, progress, and sad conclusion of our acquaintance with each other : to her possession are also consigned all the letters you have written to me, with the copies of those which you received from my hand : but do not imagine that I adopted such a measure from any motive but my own justification. I thought it right to deposit my fair name with the mother of him who wished to destroy it.—You will dare not to violate her sacred protection.

Leonora, that firm friend whose fidelity, I trust, Heaven will one day reward, seems to attach herself more closely to me in the hour of my present adversity. She is resolved

to

to share my fate, whatever it may be. I am not bereft of every worldly consolation, when such a friend yet remains. The poor old man, who left his native home for my sake, and suffered his age to repose on those promises of reward which I cannot now fulfil, has found a protector who has promised to give him bread, and cherish him during the few years of his remaining life. For his sake I request you also to watch over his repose and contentment. You know the claims he has upon you, and I wish to be the only victim of your injustice.

That I have loved you with the most ardent sincerity, your own heart will bear me witness:—perhaps I may never cease to love you. A passion such as mine, which has mingled with every principle of my nature, and become, as it were, a part of my existence, will not be easily extinguished:—but be that as it may, it is nothing to my present purpose; and the very sentiments with which this passion may torment my bosom, will act as powerful motives to confirm my resolution
of

of never seeing you again. Who could have thought that the fair prospect of our early love would have been so soon obscured, and that your boasted affection would have given such proofs of its sincerity!—But we must, in future, be strangers to each other; we must know one another no more. This is a farewell for ever!—That you may be happy is the prayer of my heart; and may she, who succeeds to my right in your affections, equal me in love, and receive in return that constancy which was due to

ISABELLA.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

TO MRS. CROLL.

IT is not now necessary to tell you the particulars of that cruel act of injustice which bears so heavy on the guilty perpetrator, that he is not able to sustain it. You have, I find, been fully informed of my passion for the first and best of women; you well know the unparalleled proofs she has given me of her affection, and the more than barbarous returns I have made to it. My happiness is vanished for ever!—Worse than clouds and darkness hang over me, and the tortures of a wounded spirit have overtaken me. I might have been the happiest and best of men—I am the most wretched and worst of beings; and the ills of my fortune are aggravated by an agony of guilt which is intolerable. Hope is lost for ever; the reign of Despair is already commenced,

menced, and I will not support it. Your son must be the victim of his own injustice. He has some sense of honour left, and that shall redeem the infamy of his name.—I cannot live!—Pity and forgive me, Madam; for ere you read these unwelcome lines, I shall have well revenged the injured Isabella's wrongs:—my own hand is ready to appease her, and in a few minutes, I shall be no more! It will surely be a lesser evil to you that I should be at once in my grave, than be bearing in my heart a fierce corroding poison, whose sluggish tortures would at length lead me to it. The last act of duty which I can perform to you, is to save you the pain of seeing me linger through the sad progress of despair and madness. Your aged eyes shall not behold your favourite child stretched on the rack of pain which threatens him:—he will disappoint Sorrow of its cruel aim. The agonies of years have rushed into this hour; and the sharpness of its sufferings will, I trust, compensate in the eye of Mercy for the scene which I am preparing.—Farewell, thou best and kindest

L

parent!

parent!—Isabella! thou loveliest and most exalted of thy sex, thou most injured woman, adieu!—Receive my dying sighs;—they are yours!—yet a little while, and the last will have escaped me!

HERE these Letters conclude; but a note is added to compleat the history. Isabella arrived safe at Naples, in the vicinity of which city she lived unknown, till, by the interest of Mr. C.—'s friends, the British Court interfered in her behalf, and in consequence of it the Pope ordered her admission into an abbey in the Neapolitan dominions, where she and her friend retired together. The old man was taken into the family of the Italian merchant, who had been mentioned with such deserved respect. To this gentleman Isabella wrote a letter some years after she had quitted England, to thank him for all his kindness to her; to assure him that

that she was perfectly resigned to her situation, and had every reason to bless Heaven, for having in its wisdom snatched her from a world, in which she should not have enjoyed her present well-grounded hopes and contented dispositions. She had never been made acquainted with the fatal method which Mr. C—— had employed to avenge her wrongs, and, happily for her, at this day remains ignorant of it.



THE END.

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